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STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY
AND LITERATURE



**STUDIES IN
PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE.**



STUDIES
IN
PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

BY
WILLIAM KNIGHT, LL.D.
PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS.



LONDON:
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1879.

265. i. 225



TO
ALEXANDER CAMPBELL FRASER, LL.D.,
PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
TO WHOM
I OWE MY INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY ;
AND WHOSE LECTURES,
IN THE NEW COLLEGE OF EDINBURGH,
FIRST AWOKE THE SPECULATIVE LIFE
IN MANY MINDS,
I DEDICATE THESE FRAGMENTS.

W. K.

UNITED COLLEGE,
ST ANDREWS,
May, 1879.



PREFACE.

I HAVE been asked to collect these Essays, written at intervals during the last ten years.

From the circumstances of their origin they are fragmentary in form, and necessarily somewhat miscellaneous. One or two thoughts, however, may be found running through them, which impart a measure of unity to the series. The essay on 'Eclecticism' explains both a doctrine and a tendency which pervade the volume; and may give at least a partial coherence to the whole.

Appearing at first in the pages of contemporary Reviews, and suggested by the controversies of the day, they make no pretence to learning. It always enhances the value of a speculative discussion, if it is supplemented or underpropped by scholarship: but numerous footnotes, and references to authors are out of place in the columns of a Quarterly Review, or a Monthly Magazine. And as the present volume is not a treatise, but a collection of Essays, I make no attempt to supply its deficiencies by additional notes. Only one or two of the perennial problems—those questions of the ages, which reappear in all the literature of Philosophy,—are discussed; and they are dealt with, less in relation to the tendencies of the time, than in their permanent aspects.

In revising them, I have recast each article less or more. Many paragraphs have been omitted; others rewritten; and allusions to matters of trivial interest erased. As I have said in the tenth essay, 'Our provincial controversies pass and are forgotten. Happily the features which disfigure them are soon buried in oblivion. But the eternal problems remain, and must confront our children's children.'

The first Essay in the series,—which was an inaugural address, delivered to the students of Moral Philosophy in St. Andrews,—and part of the third essay contain a discussion of the theory of Evolution. As this is the most definite philosophical idea underlying the methods and processes of Science, and as its advocates claim for it the merit, not only of accounting for the modifications of organic structure, but also of explaining the origin of our intellectual and moral nature—and, I may add, as opposition to its efficacy in the latter sphere is so much misunderstood—one or two additional paragraphs on the subject may be inserted, in this brief prefatory note.

I do not deny the evolution of intellectual and moral ideas. I only deny that their evolution can explain their origin. Every valid theory of derivation must start with the assumption of a derivative Source, or it performs the feat of educating something out of nothing, nay, of developing everything out of non-entity. It may surely rank as an axiom that whatever is subsequently evolved, must have been originally involved.

Our intellectual and moral nature bears the most evident traces of evolution. Within the historic period, the progress of humanity in knowledge and

feeling has been much more rapid and apparent, than any advance it has made in the type of its physical organisation. If we compare the records of civilization in ancient Egypt and Assyria with that of England in the nineteenth century, the mind and character of the race seem to have undergone a relatively greater development than its physique. It is quite true that this may be only *apparent*. Possibly the alteration may have been equally great in both : it has certainly been equally real ; although, between the faces carved on the stones and gems of the nineteenth century B.C. and those we see in the nineteenth century A.D., there is less apparent difference than exists between the science, the art, the religion, and the morals of the respective periods.

Be this as it may, however, the history of humanity is the story of an ever-evolving, ever-developing process. No one can rationally deny this. Scarcely anyone ventures to question it. No organism is unaffected by the onward wave of progressive development. No individual can escape the modifying force of hereditary influences, and if these produce change in one department of our nature, they necessarily affect the whole of it. It is therefore certain that our present intellectual and moral ideas are the result of ages of gradual growth, of refinement, and self-rectification. Nor can it be doubted, I think, that the process has been a development from within, modified by influences from without ; that forces *ab extra* have co-operated with powers and tendencies *ab intra*, in producing the result.

It may be confidently affirmed that each man is what he now is, not only in virtue of what every

other man has been before him, in the direct line of ancestry, but also in virtue of what everything else now is, and of what everything else has been ; while it is also as confidently affirmed that he is what he is, in virtue of what he has made himself, both as a rational being and a moral agent. Such is the solidarity of the race, and such the organic unity of things, that the present is the outcome as well as the sequel of the past, and that all the 'characteristics of the present age' are due to an evolving agency, latent within the universe *ab initio*. If this be so, the moral ideas which now sway the race, are a heritage which have come down to it from the dawn of history, nay, from the very beginnings of existence. They reach it with the sanctions of an immeasurable past superadded to the necessities of the present ; and the binding force of ethical maxims is not weakened, either by the fact that they are slow interior growths, or because their present form is due to the myriad modifications of external circumstance. In either case, and on both grounds, they have the prestige of the remotest antiquity ; and even if their sole *raison d' etre* were the authority of custom, that authority would be real, because based upon the everlasting order of the universe. So much must be frankly admitted ; but the whole pith of the controversy lies behind this admission.

I have pointed out in the essay referred to that if the intellectual and moral nature of man is entirely due to the influence of antecedents, if the past alone, and by itself, can explain the present—while alteration is still going on, and change is incessant—no *product* is ever reached. We have only an




Eternal *process* moving on,

παντα βεῖ οὐδὲν μένει. There is no 'standard' of the true, or the beautiful, or the good; no 'principles' of knowledge; no 'canons' of taste; no 'laws' of morality. The principles of knowledge are empyrical judgments, and nothing more; the canons of taste are subjective 'likings,' and nothing more; the laws of morality are dictates of expediency, and nothing more. As the fully developed doctrine of evolution abolishes 'species' altogether, and reduces each to a passing state of the organism, which is undergoing a modification that never ceases; so the notion of a 'standard' of the true, or of the right, vanishes, of necessity, in a process of perpetual becoming. They are always about to be; they never really *are*. The 'species' and the 'standard' may still, for convenience sake, receive a name, but it is the name of a transient phase of being, of a wave in the sea of appearance; *vox, et preterea nihil*. The nominal alone survives; the real and the ideal have together vanished.

As this conclusion has been questioned, and as it seems to me of far greater moment than is usually allowed, I may venture to unfold it a little farther.

First, it is to be conceded as inevitable that all our ethical rules must undergo future modification and change. That they must go on developing, as they have developed, is not only absolutely certain, it is an omen of hope for humanity; one of the brightest prospects on the horizon of its future. It is not difficult to discover much in the present opinion and practice of the world—in which convention so often takes the place of nature—to make us thankful that we have the prospect of future change. Evolution

has assuredly much to do in bringing out the undeveloped good, and in eradicating the blots which now disfigure both the belief and the actions of mankind. Moreover, were the moral law to operate, through all time, with invariable fixity, like the law of gravitation, it would be reduced to the inferior rank of mechanical necessity, and the moral agent would sink to the position of an automaton. As to this, however, there is no controversy. If no one doubts the past development, no one denies the future evolution. The question is not whether the adult moral judgments and sentiments of the race have been preceded by rudimentary ones, and will yet ripen into maturer and mellowed ones; as the bird has come out of the egg, and the oak from the acorn. The real question at issue—which no amount of brilliant discussion on side-issues should for a moment obscure—is as to *the nature of the Source or Fountain*, not as to the character or the course of the stream. It is as to the kind of Root out of which the tree of our knowledge has grown, and as to the substance of the Rock out of which our moral ideal has been hewn. Now, I maintain that evolution, pure and simple, is *process* pure and simple, with no *product*; with nothing definite emerging, and with nothing real or essential underneath. It is simply the Heraclitic flux of phenomena. But this takes for granted a phenomenal theory of the universe. If noumena exist, if there be a substantial world within the ego—or within the cosmos beyond the ego—a doctrine of phenomenal evolution is neither the first nor the last word of Philosophy, but only a secondary and intermediate one. The enquiry which traces the process of develop-



ment is carried on in a region entirely outside of the philosophical problem, which would emerge in full force, after every link of the chain of evolution had been traced; and the complete enumeration of details, as to the process or story of development, would carry us very little farther than the commonplace conclusion that we, and all things else, have *grown*.

It will be found that however far the historical enquiry, into the prior phases of human consciousness, may be carried, it leads back to the metaphysical problem of the relation of appearances to essences, the phenomenal to the substantial. It is only the phenomenal that can be evolved; noumena are evolving powers or essences, themselves unevolved. If, therefore, our personality contains ought within it that is noumenal, it contains something that has not been evolved. If freewill is not wholly phenomenal—though it may have phenomenal aspects—the will has not been developed out of desire, as desire may have been educed from sensation. It is no solution of the difficulty, it is a mere cutting of the knot, to say that will is a phase of desire, or the progeny of desire. Of course, if there be no such thing as freewill, if necessitarianism be true, it is the easiest thing in the world to explain its evolution; as easy as to explain how the flower issues from the seed, *i.e.*, it requires no explanation at all. If the rise of self-assertion is the rise of will, if to find a centre in one's self, and to resist aggression or encroachment on one's rights is to find the root of volition, the knot is cut; but the problem is not solved. The whole difficulty is explained away; but it reappears again, with undiminished force, after the explanation is given. Everything,

in fact, in this controversy, turns on the determination of the nature of personality, and its root, freewill. And the whole discussion converges to a narrow issue. Unless an act be due to the personality of an agent, *i.e.*, to his antecedents, he is not only not responsible for it, it is not truly his; but similarly, and *simultaneously*, unless it be due to his will, as a productive cause, it is not his, *it is the universe's*; it is the act of the antecedent generations, and not his own act. Unless it be the outcome of his moral freedom, he is an automaton, and the act is in no sense his own.

Strong objection has been taken to the statement, in the Essay in *The Nineteenth Century*, that if Evolution cannot account for the origin of the moral faculty in the lifetime of the individual, the experience of the race at large is incompetent to explain it; because the latter is merely an extension of the same principle and the same process. It seems to me, however, to be self-evident that if an explanation fails in relevancy, within a limited area of phenomena, its application to a larger area filled with the same kind of phenomena will not redeem its character, and give it success. If individual experience cannot explain the origin of our moral ideas, collective experience cannot come to the rescue; because by a mere enlargement of the space which the principle traverses, you gain no fresh light as to its nature, or its relevancy. It is said that the acts of all our ancestors have transmitted a habit to posterity, and that while the iron hand of the past is holding us, we imagine—by the trick which custom plays unconsciously upon us—that things are innate which have been really acquired for us by the usage of our ancestors. This,

however, is only possible on the pre-supposition that the course of development is both rigidly necessitarian, and purely phenomenal. If, however, the rise of the higher *out of* the lower cannot be explained by the mere pre-existence of the lower in our individual life and experience, what possible right can we have to affirm that a simple extension of the process of evolution indefinitely far back, will bring us within sight of the solution? We must have definite and verifiable evidence of the power of evolution to explain the whole processes of change within the plane of experience, before we are entitled to extend it as the *sole* principle, explanatory of the changes that occur beyond the range of that experience. Unless evolution can explain itself, we must get behind or within the evolving chain, to the source of the evolution. Unless change can explain change, we must get beyond what occurs to the cause of its occurrence; and we cannot validly take a 'leap in the dark,' if we have no previous experience of walking, *that way*, in the light. In fact, this whole discussion leads back by no intricate pathway to the metaphysical problem of causation. Is causation simply occurrence? Is it merely phenomenal sequence, as Hume and the Comtists teach?—then, evolution is the process by which all things have come to be what they are; and the laws of evolution are the laws of phenomenal occurrence, which illustrate the processes of happening. But is that an unsatisfactory theory of Causality? Is causation something more than sequence? Then the fact of evolution is not the sole principle explanatory of existence; because it leaves out of account the major truth or principle of causation itself.

I maintain, therefore, that the simple observation (for surely it is no discovery) that a higher consequent follows in the wake of a lower antecedent, will not explain how the rise has been accomplished. No extension of the time, no widening of the area, will help to explain it; because such extension and widening are simply the addition of a number of similar links to those which already constitute the chain of derivation. It introduces no principle explanatory of the whole, unless it tells us how the first link of the chain was forged, and what it hangs on; or, if there be no first link, and therefore no connection with a Source, unless it tells us what is the inner vinculum between all the separate links, distinct from their mere succession in time.

Thus, to take two concrete illustrations, if a thing is not true in itself intrinsically, the consenting belief of a thousand minds won't make it true, although it will turn it into an opinion—let us say a venerable opinion,—widely held, perhaps even obstinately clung to. Similarly, if a thing is not right in itself intrinsically, the experience of a million generations, with the tradition of pre-historic ages—most venerable tradition,—won't make it right, although they may turn it into an act of the greatest expediency.

Further, I contend that, assuming the correctness of the theory of development, to make the opinion valid, or the custom expedient, this going back on their rudiments, with those large drafts on space and time, is not requisite; because the opinion might be quite sound, and the act might be thoroughly useful, with no precedent to back them up. They might be very good and very useful, just as they arose,

and simply *because* they arose. As all principles are, on the same theory, in incessant change, and each stage of the process is equally valuable, equally venerable, equally respectable, they can all dispense with the authority of precedents. Precedent itself, in short, breaks down on the theory of evolution. What is the use of an appeal to precedent, in the case of anything whose existence is necessitated, is itself different from all its predecessors and from all its successors; but which, apart from precedent and example, has as good a right to exist as any of them; and in addition to its being necessitated, is itself ephemeral?

I cannot, however, enter any further on this controversy, without exceeding the limits of a preface, and writing another essay.

The three semi-theological papers which occur towards the end of the volume, discuss problems on the border-land between Philosophy and Religion, and belong in a sense to both. The origin of the essay on Prayer was an attempt to vindicate its reasonableness against the plea of the agnostic; and to show that, while there is a sphere to which it is inapplicable—because no rational or devout man expects to divert the course of natural law by his petitions, and to interfere with the pre-established harmonies of the world—Science could never be really hostile to devotion, nor could the latter be contraband to philosophy.

The discussion on Creed-Subscription was intended to explain and to vindicate the historical method of regarding all the 'forms' in which the human intellect arranges and systematises the materials of its belief.

One essay deals with the philosophy of *Æsthetics*,

and in it I have ventured to offer a contribution towards a theory of Poetry. Other two treat of Wordsworth, as a philosophical Poet, a Moralist, and an interpreter of Nature. Since the latest of them was written, and while these sheets are passing through the press, I have read Mr Leslie Stephen's most admirable essay on *Wordsworth's Ethics*, in the third series of his 'Hours in a Library.' That essay is one of the best yet written on Wordsworth, and renders a great deal that is said by me, in both papers, superfluous ; while it suggests much more that I have not had the wisdom to say.

W. K.

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ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY AND EVOLUTION.

AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS TO THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY CLASS, IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS, NOVEMBER 1876.

(The Nineteenth Century, September 1878).

DISCIPLINE in philosophy is at once a great inheritance of academic life in Scotland, and a permanent necessity of the human intellect. We are here to pursue research within a province which has drawn towards it, with a singular magnetic spell, the devotion of successive generations. To solve the problems of philosophy, or to discover the limit of all possible solutions, has been the ambition of the Scottish student from mediæval times. It has been said that in the North we all inherit the speculative craving, and that metaphysics are indigenous to our soil. This is but a slight exaggeration of the fact that philosophy has for centuries formed the centre of our academic discipline, and that we have clothed the venerable word with a meaning which gives it indisputable pre-eminence in the curriculum of liberal education.

It is a prevalent fashion, however, to describe the present age as predominantly scientific, to affirm that the intellectual interest of the hour has drifted away from speculation, and that the surmises of philosophy have been abandoned for the more sober teachings of experience. In this opinion I am unable to concur. Were it correct, I would characterise it rather as a

temporary aberration of the human intellect, deserting the 'philosophia perennis' in behalf of an empiricism which, in the sphere of half-truths, is as easily demonstrable, as it is commonplace and crude. But such an interpretation of the spirit of our age is altogether superficial. Far and wide throughout the republic of letters, in Britain, on the Continent, and in America, there are authentic signs of a general *renaissance* of philosophy. Within the present generation, and especially during the last ten years, those speculative problems, which form the themes of perennial debate in the metaphysical schools, have awakened an interest, prophetic of a new future for philosophy. There has been a remarkable quickening of the spirit of inquiry into all radical questions, and a far clearer understanding of their issues; while the general mind may be said to be face to face with problems which in the last generation were confined to a few scholars, or reclusive speculative men.

I do not attempt to trace the causes, European or insular, which have led to this result. It is enough to note it as one of the characteristics of our age. Instead of philosophy being superseded, or submerged in science, there are indications of a notable reaction in its favour, and of its vigorous pursuit in unexpected quarters. The splendour and rapid march of the physical sciences, which threatened for a time to eclipse, if not to extinguish interest in the older problems which lie behind them, has merely opened up fresh pathways converging as before on philosophy as the *scientia scientiarum*; and in the chief tendencies at work, at the great educational centres of the three kingdoms, every one may see the reawakening of specu-



lative thought. The whole literary atmosphere is charged with philosophy. The leaders of physical research are dealing with metaphysical questions. The topics with which modern science is most engrossed are speculative ones. In the doctrines of evolution and transformation of energy we not only find the revival of old metaphysical theories under a new scientific dress ; but, apart from philosophy, these questions are still, as formerly, incapable of solution. The recent literature of philosophy is also rich in treatises which are greatly in advance of the contributions of the previous age. Without naming any particular work or writer, I may further refer to such phenomena as these : The encounters between the most accomplished physicists and metaphysicians on ground common to both (the same problem being approached by the one from beneath, and by the other from above) ; the interest awakened in the problems of sociology ; the light which has been cast by philosophic criticism on much that was deemed inexplicable in the records of the past ; the remarkable development of the historical and comparative methods of research, as well as of those purely critical and analytic ; the attention given to the great masters of ancient wisdom, especially to the leaders of the Greek schools ; the opening up of fresh sources of information as to Indian and Oriental thought ; the establishment of new journals and societies especially devoted to psychological, metaphysical, and ethical study ; these are only a few of the signs of the working of the philosophic spirit, and the revival of speculation in our time. I may add that our higher poetry and religious literature are saturated with philosophy as perhaps at no previous period in our

temporary aberration of the human intellect, deserting the 'philosophia perennis' in behalf of an empiricism, which, in the sphere of half-truths, is as easily demonstrable, as it is commonplace and crude. But such an interpretation of the spirit of our age is altogether superficial. Far and wide throughout the republic of letters, in Britain, on the Continent, and in America, there are authentic signs of a general *renaissance* of philosophy. Within the present generation, and especially during the last ten years, those speculative problems, which form the themes of perennial debate in the metaphysical schools, have awakened an interest, prophetic of a new future for philosophy. There has been a remarkable quickening of the spirit of inquiry into all radical questions, and a far clearer understanding of their issues; while the general mind may be said to be face to face with problems which in the last generation were confined to a few scholars, or recluse speculative men.

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national history. Everywhere inquiry converges on first principles. Even those who abjure metaphysic, unconsciously philosophise in their rejection of it; while the subdivision of intellectual labour—due to the growing complexity of culture, and the increasing number of those who devote their lives to research—has widened the area, as well as deepened the lines of investigation.

One result of this diffusion of interest in the questions of philosophy, and the popularisation of its problems, is a better understanding, up to a certain point, of the great rival systems. There is more eclecticism in the intellectual air. It is beginning to be recognised that opinions, which when fully developed come into sharp collision with each other, may spring from a common root of truth, and, in their origin, be no more than a way of throwing emphasis on this or that side of a fact, equally admitted by the advocates of opposing schools. It is being seen that no system of philosophy which has lived, and won the assent of intellectual men, is entirely false; and that no system which has passed away is absolutely true. The most perfect is doomed to extinction, as certainly as the least perfect. From none can erroneous elements be entirely eliminated; and the longevity of each is mainly due to the preponderance within it of elements that are perennial, over those that are accidental and casual. In the most erroneous, there is some truth and excellence concealed; while, in the most true, error, partiality, and bias invariably lie hid. In the recognition of this fact is contained the principle of catholicity in thought, and of toleration in practice. The old maxim, 'Every error is a truth abused,' remains the basis of a

wise and sober eclecticism. It is also true that the causes which have hitherto led to differences of philosophical opinion are permanent ones, working in the blood and brain of the race; and some recent discussions in philosophy have shown the inveteracy with which the disciples of particular schools continue to interpret facts in their own way, and the strength of the constitutional bias which incapacitates certain minds from seeing both sides of a question. This has been significantly illustrated, in the department which more immediately concerns us, in those posthumous *Fragments* on ethical subjects, by Mr Grote, the accomplished historian of Greece, and the one-sided interpreter of Plato.

The causes which determine difference in the schools of philosophy arise at once from the individuality of the system-builders, and the thousand influences by which each is either consciously or unconsciously affected. The former of these is due to remote ancestral tendencies, descending in the line of hereditary succession from no one knows how distant a fountain-head, as well as to the creative power of the individual, working in the present hour. The latter may be traced in all the education he has undergone, and in the examples that have surrounded him from his infancy. Native idiosyncrasy, temperamental bias, and the force of surroundings determine the character of the opinions that are formed, and the type of the system that results. Thus the rigorous logician, in his dislike of what is vague or paradoxical, will of necessity be unjust to the mystic intuitionist; while the latter may fail to appreciate the prosaic love of fact, the demand for verification of belief, for an intellectual firmament clear of mist, and that dislike of all nebulous and impalpable

theories, invariably shown by the disciples of experience. These things must survive in the future, and determine the alternate victory of opposing schools of philosophical thought. It is in this as in the sphere of politics. It is as irrational to suppose that one particular school (intuitional or experiential, *a priori* or *a posteriori*) will dominate in the future, as it is to suppose that the supremacy of the Conservative Government will be perpetual; or that, if turned out of office, it will not come back, in due time, with a majority. No political party can remain permanently in power. The same causes that lead to its elevation, tend to its depression, and to the future enthronement of its rival. Similarly, the great pendulum of human thought continues—and must continue—to oscillate throughout the ages; and the historical succession of opposite schools is inevitable. If the dominant philosophy in England to-day is the experientialism of Locke, it is certain to be succeeded by a new school of *a priori* ontologists. For as with empires and dynasties, so with systems of opinion, the moment of the greatest triumph is also the moment of the first decline and fall.* It is probable, however, that as our historical knowledge becomes more thorough, and we are better acquainted with the philosophies of the past,—especially with the causes that have led to the rise of the great systems,—there will be a more general and adequate appreciation of each; and that a wise and sober eclecticism, shunning ‘the falsehood of extremes,’ will result. It seems to me that the next great school of British

* It is to be noted that the historical succession is equally kept up by the rise of opposite or reactionary theories, as it is by the development of existing opinion. Intellectual progress is frequently due to antagonistic reaction, and the reappearance of discarded theories.

thought will be eclectic, in tone and character, if not in name.*

It is usual, at the opening of every course of academic instruction, to indicate the nature and to define the limits of that particular province within which future inquiry is to be conducted. This I shall endeavour to do, though only in the most cursory manner.

It will be necessary to explain the function of Philosophy in general, as distinguished from ordinary knowledge ; and this will best be approached through a series of distinctions which lead up to the main characteristic difference. We shall see, in the light of these distinctions, that it is the aim of philosophy to escape from the illusions of inherited or acquired belief, that it may reach the *ultimate ground* of human knowledge ; and this may be further described as either an ascent above, or a descent beneath our secondary opinions to the region of first principles. Further, that its aim is to reach the permanent and abiding, as contrasted with the incessantly changing aspects of phenomenal existence ; that its function is also to get behind all the metaphoric modes of thought or pictured representations of reality, to the reality itself which pictures and symbols represent. The common consciousness of mankind is in bondage to the concrete and the pictorial. It sees essence only

* It may be more profoundly eclectic in spirit, if it is not so ostensibly and in name. It is, however, a question of considerable speculative interest, why eclectic schools are usually feeble in character, and barren in result, and why they so often collapse before the renewed vigour of some sectarian movement. It cannot be denied that there has been a want of inner coherency in many of them ; and if they are the offspring of compromise, or consist in a mere miscellaneous piecing together of the details of opposite systems, so that the result is an artificial patchwork, or at best an intellectual mosaic, no other result than sterility is possible.

in the light of symbol, and confuses the two together. Philosophy distinguishes them, and conducts from the symbol to the thing symbolised ; while it seeks the central or common ground of all detached and fragmentary knowledge. It is the quest for unity, that supreme unity, in which all the separateness and detail of miscellaneous knowledge is lost to view. Thus philosophy teaches that beyond the customary and traditional, behind the pictorial and concrete, within the changing, and beneath the miscellaneous, lies the sphere of the true, the real, the sempiternal, and the one.

Having ascertained what it is we are to study, with its uses, and its place in the curriculum of a liberal education, we must further ascertain the method to be pursued in our inquiries. These questions, however, are to us merely preliminary, leading up to the specific problems of *ethical philosophy*, the particular sphere and province of which may be defined in either of two ways.

In the first place, we may consider it in its relation to, and in its distinction from, the other branches which grow out of the common root of human knowledge, such as science, theology, politics, and esthetics. Its sphere and its boundaries cannot be accurately known, till they are known in the light of those relations, which connect it inseparably with the provinces which border it, on the right hand and on the left. For example, it is organically related to psychology. It is vitally connected with theology. It is indissolubly allied to sociology. It has a close relation to physiology. And yet, on the other hand, ethics has repeatedly suffered from undue encroachment by each of these correlated departments of knowledge. Now, it has been regarded as an appendix or subsection of

psychology ; again, it has been sunk in metaphysics, the distinction between the psychology and the metaphysic of ethic being ignored. Again, it has been regarded as a simple corollary to our knowledge of the phenomena of organisation : that is to say, it has been sunk in physiology. It has also been described as a province once independent, but now conquered and annexed by the Christian religion. These are illegitimate curtailments or suppressions. And the penalty of trespass, by any recognised body of knowledge upon the domain of another, is always a weakening of the enlarged province, which is made too wide by its attempted annexation of another. As, in the political history of a people, the conquest of alien states and the annexation of distant territory are the invariable prelude to national disaster, and the breaking up of the kingdom that has overgrown, or of the commonwealth that has become too vast ; so, in the realm of knowledge, a 'lengthening of cords' is not usually accompanied by a corresponding 'strengthening of stakes.' The chief encroachment at present comes from the side of physical science, or physiology. In the last generation it frequently came from the side of religion : that is to say, many English writers supposed that the function of what they called 'natural ethics,' as distinguished from 'revealed morality,' was gone. To the question, whether the rules of conduct, discoverable by reason and intuition, or gathered by experience, were valid guides to action, it was replied that they were not ; because Christianity had taken the place of natural morality, and superseded it. This distinction, however, is invalid. What is 'natural' cannot be superseded, cannot even be placed in a category opposite to what is 'revealed.' The real

distinction and contrast is between what is natural, and what is conventional or artificial. The fact that anything has been 'revealed' merely implies that it was previously unknown, or lay in shadow. The disclosure of every truth, however it may happen to have come to light, is, strictly speaking, a revelation; and its simple occurrence has all the force of a revelation, whether it belongs to the sphere of morals or religion. We shall see, in the future, how the one province is indebted to the other; and how, by the spirituality of its ideal, Christianity has given the human race a moral leverage in the pursuit of virtue unknown to the ancient schools. But it is equally necessary to vindicate the integrity and independence of ethics, as it is to point out how far, and in what direction, it is beholden to religion.

The second method by which the sphere of ethics may be defined is by a condensed summary of its chief problems, which may be presented in the form of answers to the following questions:—(1.) What are the facts of the moral nature? how are we constituted, and endowed, as moral agents? (2.) How has that nature come to be what it is? out of what prior conditions or elements has it emerged? What are the causes or forces, individual and social, temperamental and racial, that have determined the moral development of humanity, and in unison have fashioned the destiny of each separate agent? The 'natural history' of morals will be treated under this head, the growth of ethical ideas out of their dim rudimentary types, and the many curious phases that have characterised the gradual evolution of the moral consciousness. (3.) The third problem is that of duty. What *ought* we morally to be? The contrast between the

actual and the ideal, between human aspiration and attainment, the authority of conscience, and the nature of free will, fall to be considered under this head. (4.) As a natural, but sometimes forgotten corollary, a fourth problem arises: How can human nature attain to its ideal, and be brought into practical accordance with law and order? By what power or process can moral harmony be reached, the discord of the powers be abolished, and the ethical ideal be made real, in experience? In other words, how can man reach his destiny? Under this fourth head of inquiry the relation between ethics and religion comes again to be considered.

Having answered these four questions in detail, the great systems of moral philosophy, ancient and modern, must be historically and critically discussed, and the stream of ethical opinion traced from the Greek schools downwards, with the view more especially of exhibiting the *genealogy* of doctrine, and the 'increasing purpose' of the various systems. At the close of this investigation we shall return to the phenomena of the moral consciousness, and ask, what are the inferences deducible from it, or its implicates, as to the Divine nature, and the destiny of the human soul? Thus, our ethical inquiries naturally lead up to theology and religion.

From this brief preliminary outline, you will see that it is the phenomena of human character which, in the first instance, supply the ethical student with his field of observation. The area of that field is a wide one. It includes all the desires, emotions, and affections, the will and the conscience, with the practical activities or habits, which are the outcome of character. It embraces all that exists and is evolved

within the plastic region of human conduct, which is so various and manifold, at times heterogeneous and occult. We begin with an investigation of the facts of consciousness. We proceed thence to an historical inquiry as to the process of development by which these facts have come to be what they now are. This leads to the further question of the meaning of duty (a speculative problem), and to the conduct of life (a practical discipline). In its most comprehensive aspect, Moral Philosophy has two sides. From its connection with human knowledge, and from the necessity of our having an intellectual root or ground of action, it is a speculative study. From its connection with human action, and the necessity of our realising in life and conduct the principles of which it seeks the explanation, it is a practical discipline. As a body of knowledge it stretches between theory and practice, and is the arch which spans the chasm connecting speculation and action. On one side, it is the theory of our practice; on the other, it is the practice of the theory we adopt. Speculatively considered, it is a systematised body of knowledge dealing with human character and conduct. Its aim is to explain the nature and to determine the rationale of duty. It considers man, however, not merely as a knower and contemplator, but also as an actor; as a practical being whose conduct is susceptible of direct regulation and indirect control. Ascertaining the laws which govern character, it essays an explanation of habit. Endeavouring to unfold the relation between conduct and welfare, it distinguishes while it connects duty and happiness. So far as it confines itself within the region of facts, it is simply a branch of psychology. It is ethical psychology, or the psychology of the ethical, as distinguished

from the intellectual or cognitive consciousness. When, however, we ask the meaning of duty, or seek the rationale of conduct, we transcend the phenomenal sphere. Our inquiry becomes a speculative one. It rises into the metaphysic of ethics, it concerns the ontology of duty.

To put it otherwise, we stand in certain definite relations to our fellow-men, as members of the same social organism, and definite duties follow or flow from these relations. So long as we investigate these, dealing with them merely as existing facts, to discover if possible the laws which underlie the phenomena (facts of which the phenomena are the expression, and the laws the explanation), we are simply studying what happens, and the manner of its happening. But the moment we raise the further question of the meaning of duty, and—perceiving that there is a frequent contrariety between what we are and what we ought to be—ask *why* we ought to be other than we are or have been, then we have left the region of moral psychology and entered that of the metaphysic of ethic. We experience a strife between desire and duty, between appetite and reason; and, in asking its explanation, the philosophy of morals emerges. In our early years of objectivity and unreflectiveness no such inquiry is ever raised by us; nor is it then needed. What is, what happens, the actual and the existing, satisfies us; or, if it does not, we seek satisfaction simply by a change of our circumstances and surroundings. But, gradually, there comes to all of us a sense of imperfection and inadequacy. We are haunted by a feeling of the unattained, while we have occasional glimpses of an ideal above us, yet within our reach. When this arises, it acts like a whetstone

to our inquiries into the meaning or rationale of duty. The mere register of moral phenomena no longer satisfies us. The record of particular subjective states, simple or complex, of desires as phenomenal causes, or emotions as phenomenal effects, cannot satisfy the speculative craving that has been awakened. Detail of that kind is now regarded merely as a collection of preliminary data which may serve as the raw material for a philosophy of morals.

I thus distinguish between ethical science and ethical philosophy. Philosophy is not a department of science, nor is science a branch of philosophy. Their provinces are distinct, though closely related at their frontier margins. Ethical science deals with the phenomena of our moral nature in all their length and breadth; ethical philosophy deals with the inner essence of these facts, both in its height and in its depth, as well as with the link which connects them indissolubly together. Science treats of the co-existences and succession of phenomena, and of the laws which may be generalised from them. It does not attempt to reach the substrate underlying the phenomena, or the nexus by which they are united. Philosophy pursues both the substrate and the nexus. In so doing, it seeks the ultimate meaning of the whole, as a unity; and it will not relinquish its search, though science may affirm that its quest is as vain as the pursuit of the sangreal. Starting from the facts of experience, it seeks a theory of these facts; and it deduces inferences which the phenomena do not yield by way of generalisation, but by way of necessary implication, as causes requisite to account for effects otherwise unexplainable.

Thus, to sum up, we may distinguish between the

science of morals and the philosophy of duty, as we distinguish the psychology of cognition from the philosophy of knowledge, or the science of taste from the philosophy of the beautiful. In each case, psychology precedes, and metaphysic succeeds. The usual distinction between metaphysic and ethic is the source of an illusion. If there is a 'metaphysic of ethic,' the two spheres are not independent of each other, but the one is the root of the other; that is to say, the metaphysical inquiry is an inquiry into the root or ground of the ethical phenomena; just as, in another province, the metaphysical inquiry concerns the root of intellectual phenomena, and as in a third region it deals with the ground of all esthetic phenomena. They are related as the porch or vestibule is related to the shrine. I would thus classify, as three separate provinces, the Science of knowledge, of duty, and of taste; setting over against these respectively the three kindred, and co-related though independent, departments of the Philosophy of knowledge, of duty, and of taste. This is, however, to anticipate what it will be the aim of subsequent discussion to make apparent.

It may be rash to express an opinion as to the precise point which ethical philosophy has reached in the ever-advancing stream of British speculation, or in the wider field of European thought. This, with a statement of *desiderata*, or problems that await solution, may fittingly be postponed; and I may more profitably occupy the remainder of this hour, with a few remarks on the bearing of the doctrine of Evolution on the origin of the moral faculty—a question of frequent debate in the ethical schools, one not unknown to antiquity, nor unsuccessfully handled before

the rise of modern scientific method, but which has come more prominently to the front in recent literature.

Before, however, we can estimate the bearing of the doctrine of evolution on ethics, we must have a precise idea of the doctrine itself. It has been alleged that if the general principle of development is established, its application to the sphere of morality is only a matter of detail, and the derivation of all that now constitutes the moral life and consciousness of the race, out of elements originally non-moral, is no longer an hypothesis, but a fact scientifically known. In order to estimate the value of this assertion, we must first see to what the doctrine amounts, and what is the evidence in its favour.

Experience, individual and collective, shows that every organism and every character alters by minute and imperceptible changes, that each is incessantly varying, that its very life is a series of changes; further, that a living organism, if it gives rise to others, transmits an alteration of structure, and originates a change of type. So much is within the easily verifiable range of experience, and even of commonplace observation. The theory of development further suggests that we may account for all the differences which now exist in the scale of Nature, for all the varieties of organic phenomena, by a slow succession of similar changes, indefinitely prolonged, in varying circumstances, each one imperceptibly minute. Thus the doctrine fully carried out abolishes the distinction between genera and species, as well as between species and individuals, all of these being only conventional distinctions. They are names which conveniently

mark off organisms one from another when the process of evolution has gone so far, and been in operation so long, that the vast and divergent scale requires to be signalised in detail, and described at various points. But the whole having been rigidly developed, and continuing still to develop, the notion of independent types disappears. All is process; the products are simply processes prolonged. And what is reached is essentially and necessarily evanescent. Nothing can exist for all time. Each thing only exists for its own time, and perishes to make way for its perishable successor.

Now, if we cannot suppose that any organisms spring up *de novo*, without natural ancestry, or that any arrive on our earth as foreigners from another planet, whence can they severally spring? If we exclude spontaneous generation and foreign arrival, we have but two possible theories: either all have existed in some form or other always, and are only undergoing a series of transformations in time, or each has been developed out of a different and lower stage in the incessant competition and struggle for existence. The present indefinite complexity of organic forms may be explained either by the eternal existence of an indefinite number of fixed ideal types, which are revealing themselves in all the varieties of concrete existence, or by the incessant evolution of one Protean principle, which assumes endlessly varied phenomenal forms.

We may safely assume that the physical miracle of the creation of new types, whether in the form of the spontaneous generation of minute organisms, or the sudden appearance of creatures more highly organised, is not now taking place, spasmodically. If we had

reason to believe that this had ever happened, we should have equal reason to conclude that it was perpetually proceeding, that the miracle never ceased; which would, in turn, abolish its miraculous or exceptional character. If, however, it is rash to affirm that nothing originates, or can originate,—in the form of organised material structure—*per saltum*, it is not rash, but only the dictate of a cautious philosophy, to affirm that, as we have no experience of origination *per saltum*, we are not at liberty to assume that it has ever taken place; unless we discover phenomena that can be explained *in no other way*, phenomena which remain irreducible and inexplicable as the result of the slow modification of ages. So far, then, the antecedent presumption, grounded on human experience, is in favour of some kind of evolution. Evolution is the rule within human experience. Origination *per saltum* is not even an exception to the rule: it is a hypothesis called in to explain the absence of connecting links between the species that exist, the differentiation of organic types, and the remoteness from one another of the individuals which illustrate these types.

Our choice, therefore, does not lie between a doctrine of continuous evolution from a common fountain-head, and a doctrine of successive originations, at intervals of creative activity, repeated throughout the ages in linear series,—the protoplasmic power starting into action after a long period of slumber, and again retiring to rest. The latter notion must be laid aside, as inconsistent with any elevated, not to say reverential, idea of the creative power that works in nature. Our choice really lies between a doctrine of continuous

activity and unceasing development (all things emanating from a single Source, and being the outcome of a solitary principle, which endlessly manifests itself in an indefinite variety of forms); and a doctrine of fixed types, or eternal essences like the 'archetypal ideas' of Plato, which have always existed, and are indestructible, which emerge and re-emerge, are born, die, and reappear, in the incessant change and palingenesia of the universe.

I do not think that the theory of evolution in organic nature has been *proved*; but it has been rendered the almost inevitable conclusion of the scientific intellect, dealing inductively with the facts of biology (especially of embryology) and palæontology. I do not speak of any particular theory of 'natural selection' or 'heredity,' but of the general doctrine of evolution as opposed to cataclysmic bursts of energy. The protoplasm of the nettle, of the mollusc, of the lizard, and of man is chemically the same. The rise in complexity of structure, from the lowest organisms to man, is not greater or more striking than the series of changes through which each individual normally passes, from the embryonic to the adult stage. In addition, the intermediate stages between the lowest form of vitality and the highest are successively reached by all the maturer organisms, so that we may see the ascending scale of animated nature mirrored and summarised in the evolution of every embryo. Further, the marvel to human intelligence, in the development of a feathered fowl out of the albumen of an egg, is not intrinsically greater than the evolution of all the flora and fauna of the universe would be, supposing it to proceed from a common protoplasmic germ. We know that the one

takes place incessantly ; and its mystery is forgotten, in its constancy and commonness. The other is unknown to experience ; but there is no obstacle to it, in the nature of things. It contains no greater mystery than the former, and its future demonstration would not excite surprise. Even within the range of experience we may witness development in progress. Alike in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, amongst the foraminifera and the diatoms, change and transformation, *within a limited field*, may be observed. The development of higher organisms is only an inductive inference, drawn by analogy, from the phenomena that fall under our observation, and can be experimentally investigated. Even the line between the animal and the vegetable cannot now be drawn with the rigor by which the naturalists of the last generation used to separate the kingdoms of nature ; and there is reason to believe that the investigations of modern biology will result in a more emphatic demonstration of the actual emergence of fresh types of organisation out of rudimentary ones.

It is to be noted, however, that the discovery of a palæontological form intermediate between man and the ape would not settle the question that man was physically the descendant of such an intermediate ; nor would it greatly aid the controversy, except as affording a new link in the chain of organised existence. Demonstration of the theory will not be accomplished even by a discovery of *all* the missing links, but by a scientific use of the links which we possess, and by warrantable inferences from them.

But does the vital ever proceed from the non-vital ? Is the boundary between the animate and the

inanimate, as precarious as that which has separated the animal from the vegetable? This ulterior question, of graver import, would arise, when the derivation of all the varieties of vital existence from one another was a demonstrated conclusion of science. The evolution of nature may be a fact—a daily and hourly apocalypse. But we have no evidence of the non-vital passing into the vital. Spontaneous generation is, as yet, an imaginative guess, unverified by scientific tests. And matter is not itself alive. Vitality, whether seen in a single cell of protoplasm or in the human brain, is a thing *sui generis*, distinct from matter, and incapable of being generated out of matter.

The theory, however, that all the higher organised life of the universe has arisen by evolution out of lower forms—although the material never gives rise to the mental, or the non-vital to the vital—seems much more tenable than the counter theory to which I have referred, viz., that there is within the universe a fixed but indefinitely vast number of distinct types, corresponding to the eternal ideas of Plato, each of which is imprisoned within its own domain, and is kept up by inheritance and succession only within its limited area.

It must be observed that those who explain the rise of every new organised product by evolving law, demand for the accomplishment of the process a length of time almost inconceivably vast. It is contended by their opponents, that the present universe carries within it the signs of a comparatively recent origin; and that it is travelling at no distant date (though it may be measured by millions of years) to extinction; so that its beginning and its end are alike evidenced by, and involved in, its present state. This conten-

tion may be supported by evidence inaccessible to one who is not a specialist in physical science. Certainly, if the ordinary mind and the speculative inquirer are to receive it, it must be received on trust. No generally appreciable evidence has been advanced to prove such a limited duration to the existing matter of the universe, or of the globe we inhabit, as to render the evolution of all its organised products impossible within the period.

Let us suppose, however, that the fact of evolution has been proved, and that every missing link in the chain of derivation is supplied, the question would remain, *from what is the whole series evolved?* If the higher is evolved from the lower, as a fowl is from the egg, and the man from the child, from what is the lower derived? What started the whole process of derivation? If no hiatus is permissible between any link in the chain of organisation, whence did the first in the series proceed? Suppose that, in our regress towards the beginnings of life, we have reached the lowermost step of the descending scale, are we at liberty to suppose a hiatus in the orderly development, millions of ages ago, when the first germs of vitality started into being? Did the vital proceed by a still remoter development from the non-vital? or, was it created by a fiat of volition? or, *has it always existed in some form or other as an eternal constituent of the universe?* I do not see how we can escape the last alternative. The first is the evolution theory in its completest form, which assigns a material origin to all spiritual phenomena. The second is equally arbitrary if thrust into the series of evolving phenomena far back in the

process, at an imaginary creative epoch in the morning of time, as it is when capriciously introduced between the links of the causal nexus now. The supposition that it is more likely to have taken place in a distant age than at present, is like relegating the age of miracle to an imaginary mythic time, when earth was nearer heaven than now, and so degrading the idea. We are victims of metaphoric illusion in supposing instantaneous creation to be one whit easier 'in the beginning' than now. If time has had no 'morning' and will have no 'evening,' creation is as real at the present moment as ever it was. The notion that theism is inconsistent with a belief in the eternity of matter, has proceeded from the fear that, with matter eternally provided, Deity would have less to do; or that, the instantaneous summoning of the raw material of the universe, out of nonexistence, was necessary to prove his omnipotence. But with eternal matter and eternal life, the superintendence of the universe, and the building up of the organised forms which have successively appeared, would require the pervading presence and superintendence of an *Opifex mundi*, no less than if the matter itself had been created by him. If matter is not eternal, its first emergence into being is a miracle beside which all others dwindle into absolute insignificance. But, as has often been pointed out, the process is unthinkable; the sudden apocalypse of a material world out of blank nonentity cannot be imagined; its emergence into order out of chaos when 'without form, and void' of life, is merely a poetic rendering of the doctrine of its slow evolution.

Theism has nothing to fear, but much to gain,

from a scientific doctrine of evolution. Behind the proof of the gradual development of life lies the question of its origin and its Evolver; and so long as evolution cannot give a material answer to the question, *whence came the force* that gave to matter its first impulse towards the development of organic life, it is powerless to suggest, far less to establish, any atheistic doctrine. On the other hand, the evolution of organic life is the grandest conceivable illustration of the working of divine agency not detached from, but inseparably upbound with, the life of the universe. Those who explain the present cosmical order, and all the varieties of existing organisation by development, virtually see in it the disclosure or 'revelation' of several divine attributes, while they affirm that their

faith is large in Time

And that which shapes it to a perfect end.

Thus, the truth of the principle of evolution—not as explanatory of the origin, but of the procession and development of material forms—may be conceded, without peril to any verifiable truth of theology.

But is it equally relevant as an explanation of the phenomena of human character, and the mysteries of our moral being? Can we account for all the ethical doctrine and practice of the race, as the progressive development of tendencies originally very different, but which have undergone similar modification and change during thousands of generations, and millions upon millions of experiments? or do we meet with any phenomena within the moral sphere, which are inexplicable by such an extension of the theory—phenomena which are better

explained by a different hypothesis, and which are irreducible under the all-embracing unity of the former? This is now our inquiry.

In the first place, the fact that the intellectual and moral consciousness of the race has grown or been developed from lower and even dissimilar states must be as frankly conceded, as the rise and development of material organisation is conceded. The facts which prove and illustrate this process of growth form a most interesting chapter in the history of human civilisation. They are indeed a summary of the story of civilisation itself. But our inquiry lies behind such an induction of instances, however complete and satisfactory it might be made.

The question remains, in the second place, what is *the nature of this process* of gradual evolution? Suppose that the present verdicts of the moral consciousness have been evolved out of lower elements, may not the process be more accurately described as one of *emergence* than of creation by development? May not the 'increasing purpose' of human history be an increasingly accurate interpretation or reading of the reality of things? In a process of simple evolution all the stages are of equal value and significance. The very terms 'high' and 'low,' 'advanced' and 'immature,' have no significance except one that is relative to the insight of the individual who uses them. A standard of intrinsic worth there is none. Hence it is that an experiential theory of the origin of knowledge and of morals fits into a doctrine of evolution; and conversely, the psychological facts that suggest a non-experiential theory of knowledge and morality are amongst the most formidable difficulties in the

way of the doctrine of evolution. It is true that a perception of the *a priori* or non-experiential origin of the mathematical laws, dawning gradually on the mind of the child, arises out of a lower state of confused subjective groping. But the lower state does not generate the higher. With the unconscious awakening of intelligence there is a more accurate interpretation of the facts of existence, and a progressive approach is made to a knowledge of the essence and reality of things. But it is altogether unwarrantable to infer that if we go back to the beginning, we may assume that all which now is human lay potentially, if not in embryo, within the primitive ascidian, that there was a time when intelligence and morality were not, that these are even 'things of yesterday' within the slow evolving universe. That the lower contained the higher within it is a gratuitous assumption. It would be more consistent to say that the higher did not exist *at all*, until it came upon the stage of being (which would, however, involve the assumption of an incessantly fresh creation—the very assumption from which evolution seeks to free us); but it is surely much more philosophical to suppose that when a new organism appears, its differentia is not due to anything that was latent within its progenitor, but to a fresh development of the prolific life of the universe, issuing orderly and incessantly from the fountain-head of existence, and taking shape moment by moment in fresh forms of organisation.

But there is a further obstacle in the way of our admitting the unrestricted sway of evolution within the sphere of intellectual life and moral agency. Not

only is it difficult to see how the knowledge of *a priori* truths can be educed out of mere sensation; it is more difficult to see how moral freedom can be thus developed. I do not now enter on the great controversy as to the nature of free-will. Such a question of the ages is not to be dismissed in a paragraph. But, if we have evidence to warrant a belief in moral autonomy, in such a freedom as constitutes the individual a morally creative cause—while the causal nexus is maintained in its integrity,—it is clear that this freedom cannot be itself ‘the creature of circumstances.’ Evolution and necessitarianism go hand in hand. They are different ways of expressing the same thing. If man is wholly evolved, he is at best a cunningly devised machine, an automaton. He is what he is, exclusively because of what other things have been, and because of what they have made him to be. I do not attempt to indicate the nature of the evidence we have for a transcendental freedom. But it is clear that if evolution contains the whole truth on this subject, if there is no complementary or balancing truth on the other side, moral freedom must be renounced. On the other hand, if moral freedom be a fact, it is a singularly stubborn one, which will neither bend nor fit into a sectarian theory of evolution.

If necessity and automatism are true, if the evolving stream of tendency is competent of itself to perform the feat of educing all the moral life of the universe out of elements originally non-moral, the evidence should be easily accessible to the unbiassed student of the problem. Why should we distrust our moral intuitions, and accept the materialist solution of our genealogy, unless the evidence be clear, cogent, and


rigidly exhaustive? There is surely an *a priori* presumption against the latter doctrine, in the explicit testimony of consciousness to the power of moral origination. *Why* am I to believe that a material condition of the molecules of the brain is the cause of a state of consciousness, and not to believe that a state of consciousness is ever an originating cause of change in the molecules of the brain? There is action and reaction between the material and the mental. But it is not an equally necessitated action and reaction. It is not reciprocal, in the sense that both are solely determined by their antecedents. The speciality of the action of the human will and consciousness lies in its spontaneity, its freedom.

At the risk of a slight recapitulation, I may again remark that the growth of ethical sentiment and dogma out of prehistoric elements, during the innumerable eras of past existence, must be conceded to be as unquestionable as is the progress of each individual from the blank consciousness of childhood to the adult state. And the authority of the developed product is not invalidated by its history being traced, and the entire series of the steps of its development disclosed. That character should grow, as well as the physical organism to which it is related, is merely a corollary of its existence. That it should come to be what it is by a process of development, is not only no disparagement to it, but is absolutely essential to its existing at all: because nothing can possibly remain for a single instant without alteration: *πάντα ῥεῖ, οὐδὲν μένει.*

For the same reason it is self-evident that if what is now adult in the race was once rudimentary the language of its maturity must be totally unlike the

lispings of its infancy. But the discovery of the fact of growth, and even of the precise law or process of development, does not explain the progress, because it casts no light on the nature of the Cause that has determined the advance, or the propelling force that has regulated the evolution. The question remains, *whence*, or out of what prior elements, have the moral faculty and the moral feelings been developed? Some of those who find in development an adequate explanation of the problems of philosophy seem to imagine that by simply affirming the *growth* of ethical sentiment and idea, they have solved the puzzle of their origin. But let the fact of development be granted, not as an argumentative concession, but as an elementary and almost self-evident postulate, the question still remains, did the immature give rise to the more mature, or merely go before it? Did the inferior originate the superior, or simply precede it in time? That the higher succeeded the lower is evident; but it does not follow that it sprang from it, so that all the actual and potential elements of its life may be said to have been latent or contained within the lower. The phenomena of simple succession do not explain a single occurrence in nature; and the fact that in these phenomena we discover a progress from inferior forms to superior types does not explain the cause of the rise, or assign a reason for the advance. That the cause is contained within the phenomena themselves, and is not due to an interior force, distinct from the phenomena though inseparable from them, and pervading the entire series, is a dogmatic appendix which the experience-philosophy superadds to the facts which it experientially investigates.

Merely to affirm that the moral faculty has grown unconsciously in the race, as it grows in the conscious experience of each man, is not to make a great discovery in morals, but to state a commonplace which every ethical school admits; although the intuitionist moralists may not have always perceived its extent so clearly, or admitted its significance so fully, as their rivals have done. But to affirm that, because it is developed, it is also derived from the elements that foster that development, is the illicit inference which the derivative moralists either add to, or confound with, the admitted fact. Because the consciousness of the child is a seeming blank, his mind—to use the old illustration—like a sheet of white paper on which impressions are gradually imprinted from without, was the ground on which the experiential philosophers of the past denied that there were any latent elements within it or behind, which experience did not create, but only evolved or brought to light. Within the present generation the controversy has merely widened out from the individual to the race. The genesis of all the human faculties is now sought through a wider investigation of prehistoric conditions, and the subsequent struggle and progress of the race. But it is only the area from which the inference is deduced that has widened or been changed; the process of deduction remains essentially the same. If there was anything to warrant the old contention that what is at length developed in the individual is not the simple product of experience—the mind of the infant being like a palimpsest than an unwritten parchment—precisely the same contention is valid now in reference to the larger and slower evolution of the



historical consciousness of the race. The controversy of to-day is really the old controversy between Socrates and Protagoras, between the Aristotelian and the Platonist, between Locke and Leibnitz, between Hume and Kant, 'writ larger,' through the amazing development of physical science, biological research, and the pre-historic archæology of the present day. That the ingenious speculations of the teachers of evolution have filled up for us the possible outlines of a most interesting chapter in pre-historic archæology is undoubted. The psychological facts which Mr Darwin and others have signalised are important factors in the ethical development of the race: but they have not solved the ethical problem, and no amount of successful labour, along the lines in which they are working, will solve it.

I admit that were it proved that the moral faculty was derived as well as developed, its present decisions would not necessarily be invalidated. The child of experience has a father whose teachings are grave, peremptory, and august; and an earth-born rule may be as stringent as any derived from a celestial source. It does not even follow that a belief in the material origin of spiritual existence, accompanied by a corresponding decay of belief in immortality, must *necessarily* lead to a relaxation of the moral fibre of the race. It is certain that it has often done so. But it is equally certain that there have been individuals, and great historical communities, in which the absence of the latter belief has neither weakened moral earnestness, nor prevented devotional fervour. It is clear, therefore, that we should no more discredit what has come to be what it is, by a process of

development, than we should distrust the present verdicts of the moral faculty, because future experience may on many points enlarge or widen them. It may even be said that the derivation of a faculty out of elements originally unlike itself, bringing with it the authority of accumulated experience, indicates the working of a great cosmic law which gathers force from the width of the area it sweeps, and the time it has taken to evolve its products; that it comes to us now with the prestige of a remote antiquity; that it can appeal to the precedent of a million generations, and since it has alone survived in the struggle for existence, it is fortified in its appeal by the failure of every rival that has for a time competed with it, but been gradually thrust aside.

This, however, being conceded, it is necessary to observe with accuracy what we reach by such a process. We can record progress, observing a continued advance in the ethical conceptions of the race; but we can discover no fixed standard of action, no immutable canon, and hence no absolute criterion of morality, because the race is still changing and developing. The alterations produced by the 'increasing purpose' of time, in the conceptions and feelings of the race, are as certain and inevitable as the changes on the earth's surface produced by physical agents. If we have no principle other than evolution to guide us, nothing underneath the linear series of changes which we call development, and giving to these their character and explanation, we are able to call one thing 'good,' and another 'evil,' only because the forces that sway society have happened to develope in one direction, and not in another. I do not say that they

might have as easily tended in a direction different from the one they have taken. The fact that only one has been taken, after the myriad struggles of the race, may be held as proof that, to a humanity such as ours, one only was possible. But, on the theory of evolution, the goal is not yet reached. There not only may, but there must, be endless future development and change. We have not attained to anything higher than a conventional rule of expedient action. An absolute standard or fixed criterion of action is impossible. Since our humanity itself is in a perpetual process of 'becoming,' its rule of action always about to be, never absolutely is. It is essentially relative, necessarily contingent, incessantly changing. What is valid for the human race to-day *may* cease to be valid to-morrow, and *must* cease to be valid in the long run. It must become obsolete through the slow procession of the ages, and the stealthily superannuating hand of time. A rule which thus disintegrates and dies away is not one which can command the reverential suffrage of the race, even while it lasts. Its permanence in any one form being momentary, its deepest characteristic being its incessant change, humanity can never really know what that is, it is asked to reverence.

All 'becoming' tends to 'being' as its end, or it is itself meaningless; and we can only explain 'becoming' by presupposing 'being.' If therefore that which we have to explain, always about to be, never actually is, if it is all process and no product, or if the product is simply process prolonged for ever, there is no intelligible meaning in the process itself; its very rationality disappears. In other words, some know-

ledge of the end is necessary to give meaning to the means. It is the goal that makes the race intelligible, the port that explains the voyage. In any case, you must have a starting point and an ending place; two termini to bound the course and differentiate it, else the intermediate stages are really unintelligible. But while you cannot get within sight of these termini by the inductions of experience—whether by an attempted regress to the fountain-head of history, or an imaginary surmise of its destination—you find them revealed and explained at every stage of the intermediate journey, in the consciousness of an absolute rule, autocratic, universal, and ideal. I do not mean to say that we can retrospectively discern the actual beginnings or first dawn of morality, or that we can prospectively anticipate the future stages of development to which it may attain. Even were such surmises or forecasts possible, they would be of no use as data towards the solution of the problem, inasmuch as they would be either gathered historically from the field of experience, or inductively inferred by the aid of analogy. What we reach, however, transcends experience, without being independent of it; nay, by the very help and teaching of experience, it outsoars it.

The chief point to be noted in connection with a derivative theory of morals is the helpless position in which it all leaves us, in the exercise of moral approbation and disapprobation. On the principle of evolution, all the phases through which the ethical sentiment has passed were of equal validity for the particular stage which human nature had reached, in its upward career; and, though we may contrast, we may not judge them by our standards or canons of

to-day. The fierce passionate struggles of the infantile stage, instead of being condemned, are to be revered, as the necessary steps of an 'eternal process moving on' by which the adult sentiment has been reached; just as the unlimited strife amongst the lower organisms in nature has resulted in an elevation of the type, and the survival of the finest and fittest to live. If, however, we are to possess any canon of morality, any rule by which we may test the intrinsic worth of actions, we must find it in the attestations of a principle which, though evolved by experience, is not its child. And so, the advocates of empiricism and evolution, who have recently entered the lists as champions of their own position against the intuitional moralists, consistently affirm that there *is* no absolute standard of right and wrong: that the verdict of society, based on the unconscious perceptions of utility transmitted through a thousand generations, makes a thing either right or wrong. Things are not to be done by us, because they are intrinsically right; they are right, because we do them; that is to say, because *the race* (not the individual, who may be capricious) has agreed, through the consenting experience of centuries, to do them. Intuitional moralists, on the contrary, maintain that certain things are to be done, and others to be abstained from, in virtue of an intrinsic rightness or wrongness attaching to the acts themselves; and that the assent of the race to a common rule (with manifold and inevitable exceptions, which both prove and illustrate it) is due to its progressive discernment of that intrinsic rightness, or to the unconscious sway of the principle of right reason which governs, while it 'worketh out of view.'

Intuitional moralists affirm that the authority of the moral consciousness is weakened and degraded on every theory of evolution, *which is also a theory of derivation*. If the progressive experience of the race, refined, disciplined, and consolidated through many generations, has given rise to the moral faculty, the authority of that which has been thus derived is essentially affected by the disclosure of its genealogy. It is idle to allege that the discovery of its origin in mere sensation is not (as has been said) 'to degrade the progeny, but to ennoble the ancestry;' for if the honour of having produced a thing so totally unlike itself is conceded to sensation, the suspicion of so unethical an origin will lessen the sanctity, while it suggests the commonplaceness of virtue. It will also reduce and chill the ardour with which virtue is pursued. It is true that we may reverence that which we suppose to have sprung from the dust of the ground, as much as that which we imagine to have descended from the skies; but, dispensing with both these metaphoric modes of thought, we cannot reverence anything so devoid of interior character and coherence as a mere process of becoming, or stream of tendency, an endless genealogy without an original, a series of phenomena of which the only certain thing is that A is the antecedent of B, B of C, and so on *ad infinitum*. Moreover, in tracing the origin of the moral faculty by the single light of evolution we may not rest at mere sensation; we must go much farther back, and can pause consistently nowhere; just as, in our anticipations of change in the future, we cannot rest at any conceivable goal, but must believe that modifications of the present moral *consensus* of humanity will go on, till a

product totally unlike it is reached. Both in our regress and in our progress, phenomena will be found which bear no resemblance to the present, but which nevertheless are, on the one hand, the elements out of which the present has come, and on the other the product in which the present must merge and disappear. We must in consistency go as far back and as far forward as we can, in this dissection and analysis of the moral sense; but when the torch of history fails us, and the paler light of archæology fades in the dimness of prehistoric surmise, the experience-philosophy compels us to step backwards into the darkness as trustfully as when we began our explanation of the facts of consciousness by its aid. We cannot therefore stop at primitive man or the primitive animal; we must reach the primitive protoplasm. The origin of the moral faculty must be sought far beyond the dim twilight of the nations, beyond the dimmer twilight of animal sensations, in the blank midnight of the non-vital and purely physical forces. And, conversely, we must suppose it not only possible, but certain and necessary, that in the long millenniums of the future, a product totally different from the present moral sense will be evolved out of it. We cannot draw a line and say 'Lo! *here*, the moral faculty is formed, is mature; whereas, *there*, across the line, it was unformed and immature.' It is always forming, always maturing, incessantly changing; and it must yet undergo transformations into products as unlike the present as these are unlike the contractile sensations of the ascidians in the primeval seas. All things, according to the theory, are in perpetual motion; and the πόλεμος πᾶτερ πάντων of Heraclitus is as fully applicable to the pater-

nity of the moral faculty, as it is to the origin of the physical cosmos. In short, the universe tells us of the 'ebb and flow,' but not of the

ever-during power
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation.

In opposition to this derivative theory of morals, our appeal is still, as it used to be in olden controversy, to the facts of consciousness, to the absolute revealed in and disclosed to consciousness. It is well known that different investigators of the same problem, all appealing to consciousness, announce as the result of that appeal a different and sometimes a totally opposite verdict, and thus reach conclusions diametrically opposed. Like the rival sects, with the same authoritative standard,

This is the book where each his dogma seeks,
And this the book where each his dogma finds.

Nevertheless, we cannot dispense with the appeal; for consciousness is, and always must be, our final resort in every controversy. As we have no infallible arbiter—and if we had one, his decisions would require the interpretation of our consciousness—all debate must end in, and all inquiry ultimately repose upon, the testimony of the disciplined reason, and enlightened human consciousness. This—an interior light, directing without dictating—and not the inductions of sense-perception derived from objective phenomena, is our only valid guide, and the final arbiter of disputed problems.

We perceive
Within ourselves a measure and a rule,

Which to the sun of truth we can apply,
That shines for us, and shines for all mankind.

In the light of this appeal, our contention is, that if we have evidence sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the phenomena of the moral consciousness are not explicable by evolution in the lifetime of the individual, evolution is incompetent to explain them, suppose you extend it to a million generations. If we cannot explain the origin of moral judgment in any single life by the principle of association alone, how should association be competent to explain its genesis for the race at large? If duty does not arise out of utility by the ascending steps of fine gradation in a lifetime, why should a mere lengthening of the period enable it to do so? In the very limited field open to experimental research, we have no instance of the one passing into the other, or giving rise to the other: and we cannot concede that mere length of time will make amends for what the threescore years and ten of individual life, and the few thousands of verifiable history have failed to start. If, within the range of human experience, we saw the process beginning, if we could trace any rudimentary signs of such a process at work as the transformation of a sensation into a moral perception, or a discernment of utility into a conviction of duty, we could by analogy suppose the process indefinitely extended, its area enlarged, and its significance enhanced. But the experimental fact, which should be the fulcrum of the argument, is wanting. It is alleged that we have frequent instances of the love and pursuit of virtue as a means to happiness passing into a love and pursuit of it as an end, and for its own sake. But in none of the examples cited can we be

sure that the love and pursuit belonged to these two separate categories in the respective stages : that there was not a love and pursuit of it for its own sake, though more dimly, at the first, and more explicitly and pronouncedly afterwards ; while considerations of utility may have been conjoined with this in both stages, at one time prominently and again more faintly.

Many efforts have been made to trace the parentage of conscience in elements unlike itself. Mr Maudsley tries to find its root in the most animal of all our instincts. More recently it has been said that the conviction of an inherent right to live is the germ out of which it has been evolved ; a conviction which takes articulate shape in the proposition, ' No one has a right to kill me,' but which existed, in a rudimentary form, long before it expressed itself thus definitely. Leaving Mr Maudsley's paradox unexamined, I may devote a concluding sentence to the other alleged root of the moral faculty.

If the conviction ' I have a right to live, no one has a right to kill me,' be the germ out of which conscience has grown, we have first to account for the rise of that conviction itself, out of a state in which it was the normal law of the universe for the stronger to kill, and for the weaker to be killed. The whole difficulty is slurred over, if our explanation starts with a fully formed sense of personality, and a developed feeling of an inherent right to live. The problem to be solved is the reversal of the primitive law of universal war, of indiscriminate competition and carnage, when the only right was that of the strongest, and when no *individual* could have any right to live, because his strength was

simply relative to the number and the vigour of his competitors ; and, however strong he was, he might at any moment be supplanted by a stronger. The state supposed to be evolved out of this, is a state in which, not only the stronger members of the race, but even the weakest individuals, come to feel that they have *an inherent right to live*. This, it seems to me, evolution—which is a mere process of becoming—cannot solve. Is it that, when the stronger have become proficient in the art of pushing weaker comrades aside, when they have vanquished opposition and had a surfeit of slaughter, their sense of prowess gives rise to the new feeling that they have done well ? Is it that, in virtue of their success in killing, they win for themselves a right to survive ? Is it that, because of the number of their victims, they purchase immunity from destruction ? If so—and I do not see how otherwise it could be a case of evolution, pure and simple—this is an instance of a principle evolved out of its own opposite ! The hiatus between the stage in which it was natural that one animal should kill, and that others should be killed, and the stage in which this became *unnatural*—and the conviction sprang up that each had a right to live and to continue in life—is one that cannot be bridged over by any conceivable process of evolution, unless it be evolution by antagonism. The one was a state in which our animal ancestors were wholly destitute of a sense of right, and could have no notion of a claim to exist.

For why ? because the good old rule
 Sufficeth them—the simple plan,
 That they should take who have the power,
 And they should keep who can.

The other is a state, not different from this in degree, but diametrically opposite in kind—a state in which each individual discerns the worth of his own personality, and his *inherent right* to exist.

And if the chasm between these two stages is wide, and unbridged by evolution, does it fare any better with the next step in the process of development? Suppose that the persuasion, ‘I have a right to live,’ has been gradually manufactured out of its own opposite, how does the former give rise to the conviction that *another individual*, like me, has an equal right to live, and to live well? The continued existence of one was at first secured only by the constant death of competitors, in the struggle for existence; how does this give place to the conviction that the others—who might very possibly wish to kill the successful and surviving individual—have an equal right to live? No theory of evolution, no process of development can by itself answer this question, or solve the problem of the genealogy of moral ideas.

Further, we have experimental proof, within the limits of our conscious life, that the Authority to which we bow down is not derived from anything lower than itself. It carries the sign of its own absoluteness and non-contingency with it, in the imperial and autocratic manner in which it deals with any slight to its demands.

It will be my aim, in subsequent lectures, to illustrate the working of this in detail; to show how, in the phenomena of conscience, we find the traces of a principle,

Deep seated in our mystic frame,
not evolved out of the lower elements of appetency

and desire, but controlling these, as an *alter ego*, 'in us, yet not of us.' Appearing at first simply as one amongst the other phenomena of consciousness, it mysteriously overshadows them; and suggests in the occasional flashes of light sent across the darker background of moral experience, the working of a personality behind our own. As the seed quickens in the furrow, when the surrounding elements co-operate to elicit its energy, so with this latent faculty. Awakening from its slumber during the process of moral education, it is not the simple product of that process; but the stimulus it receives merely liberates an imprisoned power. Thus liberated, it discerns its own original, not by retrospective glances along the narrow lines of individual or cosmological development, but by a direct intuition of the reason: and it gains

Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,
 And hear the mighty stream of tendency
 Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
 A clear sonorous voice, inaudible
 To the vast multitude.

ON ECLECTICISM.


A LECTURE, DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY
CLASS, IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS, NOV. 1878.

(*The Theological Review*, January 1879.)

I PROPOSE to discuss some of the features of Eclecticism, a system of philosophy which has received but scant justice from its critical successors.

It is both a system, and a tendency ; a formal philosophical doctrine, and a spirit of philosophizing. For my present purpose, it is not necessary to consider it historically, either in its strength or weakness, as it appeared in the third century at Alexandria and Rome, at Athens in the fourth and fifth, or at Paris in the nineteenth ; nor to deal with its secondary developments in social organizations, artistic schools, or religious systems. What I wish to put before you is its general speculative drift, its leading features, and permanent tendency. These may be seen, not only from the phases it has assumed as a coherently developed doctrine, but even more characteristically from its unconscious presence, within the lines and under the limits of the systems, which have ignored it. Wherever the effort to reconcile the claims of rival doctrines has taken the place of a one-sided advocacy of special views, the result, to the extent of the reconciliation, has been eclectic.

The term, however, is unfortunately misleading, as



it seems to indicate the really elementary process of gathering together bits of systems, and arranging them, in what must be at the best an artificial patch-work. No wonder that the result of a mere collection of *memorabilia*, however carefully made, should be a product without unity, coherence or vitality. A system that resolved itself into a 'golden treasury' of elegant extracts would deserve the neglect of all competent logicians, and of every serious thinker.* And this is the ungenerous and inaccurate charge to which Eclecticism—the system suffering from its defective title—is sometimes exposed. It is difficult, however, to find a better word to describe it than this confessedly inaccurate and misleading one. The name of no system of philosophy is altogether adequate. The words 'Experientialist' and 'Ontologist,' however convenient as indicating a certain philosophical tendency, are both inappropriate in some of their applications, and cannot be used with absolute rigour. The terms 'Intuitionism' and 'Utilitarianism' are each misleading. The inadequacy of the word used to describe it is thus a misfortune which Eclecticism shares in common with every other system of opinion.

Keeping in view, therefore, what has already been said, viz., that its essential features exist in many systems which disown it, we shall find that the propositions which lie at the basis of Eclecticism are so self-

* On the same day on which this lecture was delivered, Dr. Martineau, in a profound and noble utterance from the Principal's Chair in Manchester New College, spoke of "an eclectic commonplace-book of favourite beliefs" as "the last resort of superannuated philosophy." This remark will be appreciated perhaps most of all by those who most carefully distinguish between "the commonplace book" and the system and spirit of Eclecticism.

evident, that in enunciating them we may seem to be stating a series of truisms. Out of their simplicity, however, profoundly important issues arise.

Eclecticism originates in the elementary but constantly forgotten fact, that there is always truth on both sides of every great controversy that has divided the thoughts and feelings of mankind ; that error has its origin, usually, if not always, in the abuse of truth, in the exaggeration or travesty of fact ; that no intellectual doctrine is absolutely and entirely false, or, root and branch, a delusion ; that extravagance in opinion usually proceeds from the eagerness of devotees who carry true principles to false conclusions, and, in their enthusiasm for a particular doctrine, forget its obverse. It is not that they are wrong in the emphasis they throw on any special truth or group of truths, but only in ignoring the fact that each has a context dissimilar to itself, though complementary and equally valid ; and especially in forgetting that all major truths are arranged in pairs, and may be placed in the scales over against others of equal weight and value ; so that corresponding to every important doctrine there is one equally great, which balances it, on the opposite side. When it is said of rival systems that they are each ' resistless in assault, but impotent in defence '—although I would prefer to say, resistless in defence while impotent in assault—what is meant is, that there is a citadel of strength (because a residuum of truth) at the heart of the most erroneous and extravagant, and that there is an element of weakness (because a tendency to bias or excess) associated with the truest that a progressive civilization has evolved. Thus the principle of Eclecticism contains a very obvious theory of the nature of

truth and of error, and it offers an explanation of their origin respectively.

Let us suppose two minds of different type or idiosyncrasy dealing with the same problem,—be it the origin of knowledge, or the conditions of responsibility, a doctrine of the beautiful, or a theory of life,—their hereditary intellectual tendencies vary, their temperaments are not the same, and their education has been different. They therefore approach the problem from opposite sides. Necessarily, they survey it in a different manner; and their interpretation, however accurate, must be dissimilar. One will throw the stress on the subjective side of human knowledge, the other on the objective. The former, starting from the Ego, is idealistic throughout; the latter, beginning with Nature, is materialistic to the close. Or the one looks at man as a determined element in the material cosmos, and his ethical system is necessitarian; the other regards him as a free autonomous personality, and his system is libertarian. These different interpretations of the same problem, both true at the root, generate controversy. The differences increase; and schools of opinion arise, in which the opposite conclusions of the masters are intensified by their less original pupils. The chasm between them gradually widens, and as the conflict grows, the partizans of each system retire to its strongholds, till the truth which each most loudly asserts is denied by its antagonist. The doctrines which were at the first mutually accepted (on the one side as major, and on the other as minor) become party badges, and on both sides there is a fierce and sectarian denial of the opposing system. In intellectual and speculative theory, it is as in matters personal, social

and national,—a minute divergence between two persons who are perhaps both in the right, widens into a gigantic misunderstanding, or a slight diplomatic difference ripens into an international quarrel. And if, in most national quarrels, both nations are to blame, and in the majority of political party-contests neither side has a monopoly of justice, it is precisely so in the strife of the philosophical sects, in the controversies between artistic schools, and the warfare of religious parties.

Now suppose that the controversy between two philosophical sects has been protracted and keen. As with every other form of strife, the antagonism at length dies away, and, in the calmer and juster mood which succeeds, a desire springs up to reconcile, if possible, the opposite claims. A retrospective study of the controversy shews that the whole truth lay with neither party, that each had something real to defend, something worth defending, and that the strife between them was philosophically illegitimate; although, had there been no collision, the characteristic merits of each would not have been so prominently signalised. In the case of diametrically opposite theories, which negative each other, the excess of both is neutralised; and while each may establish the truth of its own affirmation, its negative or aggressive tendency is held in check by the mere presence of its opposite. Thus the antagonism of the schools preserves the philosophical world from the intolerant usurpation of any one, and brings out the special excellences of each.

A state of perpetual controversy amongst the sects, however, would do no particular good, if it did not lead to a better appreciation of their respective merits; and we find that an eclectic or reconciling movement gene-

rally follows, and is produced by, the controversies of the schools. It is gradually seen that each, if 'right in what it affirmed,' was 'wrong in what it denied,' right in so far as it was positive, and wrong only in its negation of the *locus standi* or *jus vivendi* of the systems it sought to annihilate.*

The human mind cannot find repose either in the onesidedness of a partisan system, or in the absolute repression of partisanship, and the substitution for it of such a kind of eclecticism as shrinks from the expression of difference. The eclecticism I am expounding is assuredly not one which would adjust differ-

* It is to Leibnitz that we owe the phrases I have quoted in the text, and there is perhaps no name in the roll of modern philosophy whose appreciation of the spirit and aim of Eclecticism was more thorough than his. 'I have tried,' he says, 'to disinter, and to reunite the truth, buried and dissipated under the opinions of the sects of the philosophers.' (*Trois lettres à M. Remond de Montmort*, Opera, ed. Erdmann, p. 701). 'I have found that most of the sects are right in a large part of what they affirm, but not in what they deny. . . . I flatter myself that I have penetrated to the harmony of the several realms of philosophy,' (he is speaking of the materialists and the idealists), 'and have seen that both parties are in the right, if only they would not exclude each other,' p. 702. Again (letter iii., p. 704), 'Truth is often wider spread than one thinks; but it is very often overlaid, and very often covered up; and weakened, mutilated, and corrupted by additions which spoil it, or render it less useful. In getting hold of the traces of Truth amongst the Ancients, or, to speak more generally, our predecessors, one must draw gold out of mud, the diamond from the mine, and light from darkness. Thus would we reach the *philosophia perennis*.' So too Cousin, 'There is no absolutely false system, but many incomplete ones, systems true in themselves, but erroneous in their pretence each to comprehend within itself that absolute truth which is only to be found in them all. The incomplete, and therefore the exclusive, that is the one radical vice of Philosophy, or rather of the philosophers, because philosophy is in all the systems. Each system is a reflection of reality, but unfortunately it reflects it only under a single angle.' *Fragmens Philosophiques*, I. p. 242 (*Du Fait de Conscience*).

ences, and end controversy, by the adoption of mild and hazy commonplaces, which no sect or school could possibly deny. It conserves every intellectual difference that is the outcome of distinctive thought, and of a true interpretation of the universe; only, it makes room, alongside of each interpretation, for others that have usually been held to be inconsistent and incompatible with it.

As it is, however, in the union of one or two historical facts with sundry psychological phenomena that Eclecticism may be said to find its stronghold, I pass to the consideration of these.

In the first place, there is the historical fact of the incessant rise of new systems, their inevitable decay, and their perpetual reappearance. Why do systems of opinion pass away from the thought and the allegiance of mankind, but from the radical imperfection which necessarily characterises them; from their adequacy for a time, their inadequacy for all time? Why do they re-appear again, but from the root of truth which they contain? The mere fact of the resurrection of old and apparently exploded doctrines, is a historic proof of their superiority to the assault that seemed to lay them low. It shows that the conflict of opinion—however interesting as mental gladiatorship, and however valuable as a means of developing knowledge, and sifting truth from error—is, after all, a conflict which leaves no one absolute master of the field. If the controversy is renewed, if the strife begins again, it is because the forces on neither side were silenced, and because each can return to the combat with unexhausted courage and fresh resource.

The next fact is, the impossibility (judging by

analogy) of uniformity of belief, and therefore of the cessation of controversy, ever occurring in the history of the world—a consummation which is probably no more possible, and no more desirable, than the cessation of physical storms, and the substitution of perpetual calm and sunshine. This—the necessity of fresh controversy—though generally recognised as a feature in the progress of civilisation, has perhaps never been adequately appraised, and its corollaries have certainly not been always seen. It involves the certainty of the rise of new types of philosophical thought and belief, while the human race continues to advance. With every new cycle will come a new phase of insight, and a new attitude of feeling towards the universe. Does any one, except the merest tyro in historical knowledge, or the most youthful champion of debate, expect the advent of a time when speculative controversy will cease, and the opposition of the schools disappear. Such a result would imply either a radical alteration in the structure of human nature, or the extinction of belief in an ideal, and the collapse of effort to reach it. It would be the very dullest and dreariest world in which every man agreed with every other man upon every conceivable topic. It would imply the decadence of the intellect, the withering of the imagination, and the stoppage of the pulse of the human heart. It would amount, in short, to an arrest laid on the mainsprings of civilisation. And where are we to draw the line between an agreement on every possible problem and a general concurrence in the greater problems, as finally solved for the human race? Is not the distinction only one of degree? If absolute uniformity of opinion is impossible, is general concurrence less utopian?

But *why* must systems of opinion run through their cycles, and re-appear? Why are the intellectual differences, which culminate in opposing doctrines, destined to remain as permanent and indelible tendencies of human nature? Are there any psychological facts which explain how they have hitherto existed, and justify the inference that they will continue to characterise the future evolution of humanity.

One explanation is, that every developed opinion, no matter how contorted and extravagant it may be, has sprung from some real root in the soil of human nature. It has been evolved; and if evolved, its formative principle cannot have been mere vagary, hap-hazard, or blind caprice. Grant that it was often a crude guess, a surmise, a thought casually thrown out at an object, that gave rise to primitive belief. These guesses were the offspring of previous intelligence, and the precursors of genuine knowledge. The surmises, which grew out of vague unilluminated gropings, were disciplined by degrees into real insight, definite and verifiable. But, of necessity, each separate surmise, directed towards a particular aspect of Nature or of Life, was different from the rest; and the result of the difference is seen in the various 'doctrines of knowledge,' and 'systems of the universe,' or 'theories of existence,' which now divide or distract the world. The source of the difference is chiefly within the individual theorist. It is due to temperament, and hereditary intellectual tendency, although also, in a minor degree, to the education and surroundings of the system-builder.

Given a certain temperament and ancestral tendency, a certain education and surrounding influences,

it is quite possible to predict the system that will naturally emerge; to say whether it will be intuitional or experiential, idealist or realist, *a priori* or *a posteriori*. Up to one-half of the result, it is altogether beyond the individual's control, and is as rigidly determined for him as is the colour of his hair, or the height of his stature, his nationality, or his mode of speech. Diversity will therefore necessarily characterise the future systems of human opinion and belief. It is due to the immense variety and latent force of human nature, which is a fact of equal magnitude and significance with its underlying unity—a variety which is not only not opposed to the unity, but which illustrates it, and goes on developing alongside of it. On the one hand, the unity of human nature, and on the other its variety, constitute the root or ground of eclecticism. If the race is one in organic structure, in mental endowment, in moral tendency, in imaginative capacity, and in spiritual possibility—despite the thousand varieties which proclaim our separateness and individuality—the outcome of this unity, in the endless systems we construct for the explanation of the abiding mystery of the universe, must in every instance possess a greater or a less degree of truth. On the other hand, the variety which marks us off from one another, the individual differences which separate us—despite our organic unity and the solidarity of the race—must of necessity give rise to fresh forms of dogma and belief; our doctrines being sifted and refined by controversy, and our frames of theory corresponding more and more adequately to the truth of things, while they differ from the older ones which they supersede. We may thus expect a simultaneous

development and deepening both of the unity and the variety of human nature, its diversity in opinion, feeling and practice, its unity in aspiration and aim.

Here I may put a question, which, however simple, deserves consideration. What is the meaning of the belief that two antagonist systems can be reconciled, and of the attempts made to effect the reconciliation?—for example, that the philosophy of experience can be reconciled with that of intuition, or even that the claims of Religion and Science can be adjusted? that there is no necessary collision in the nature of things between the two, but only between sundry mistaken versions or interpretations of each? If the experiential and the *a priori* systems of knowledge can be harmonized, if the intuitional and the derivative theories of morals can be reconciled, it is because every system of the universe that has been evolved from the brain of man, past, present and to come, must arise from some germ of reality, and its error and extravagance are simply distortions of the truth. Add to this, that a published system of opinions, or that part of it which can be epitomized and exhibited in a reasoned treatise, is only a small portion of it. A large context is never exhibited to view; and just as a man may be intellectually refuted without being convinced, because what has been refuted is only that portion of his opinions, which was revealed and expressed in words—the context lying within his mind undivulged being also untouched by argument—so the vital part of every dogma may be a subterranean element, a root unconscious to the individual, and never exposed to view. If its upper growth is cut down, like those perennial plants of

which while the stem decays the root survives, it will send forth flowers next season freshly as before.

We may thus see how action and reaction is an inevitable and abiding feature in all human opinion and belief; how the truth and the error of 'systems' is a question of degree; how their vitality is due to the truth they contain, and their longevity to the amount of that truth; how immortality, in the sense of abiding continuity, is the prerogative of none; but resurrection and rehabilitation may be the destiny of each. It is impossible for an individual or a generation, to have an equally clear grasp, and an equally firm hold of the opposite and balancing sides of any truth; and the prominence which the individual or the age may give to any special view, always leads by reaction to a corresponding predominance, in the next age, of some other view. So soon as any truth is generally recognized, and its novelty has passed away, it falls by a natural process into the background of the human consciousness. Another truth, which could not get full justice during the ascendancy of the former, is brought to light, is disinterred if not discovered; and its advocacy has the charm of novelty for a time, till it too shares the fate of its predecessor, and sinks into the shade, to make room for its perishable successor. But this is not the mere rise and fall of systems, and their re-appearance, precisely as they lived before. Nothing ever wholly dies; but nothing returns to visible life exactly as it was before. It is changed, both by its previous existence in the field of the human consciousness, and by its temporary absence from it, by its departure and its return.

Besides, as every dominant doctrine tends at once and

insensibly to become sectarian, the best antidote to the evil of onesidedness is usually a counter movement towards the other side, even although it be a movement in excess across the dividing line. Thus the error of idealism is met by materialistic reaction, and *vice versa*. The evils of extreme necessitarianism are counteracted by an extreme doctrine of liberty. The enthusiastic advocacy of a truth, long disesteemed, is not only sure to provoke hostility, but its excess is most easily counterworked from a position on the other side of the golden mean. Enthusiasm for a particular truth is always beautiful, and always useful ; but, as its advocate often becomes its idolater, the bias of his enthusiasm is best restrained by a counter enthusiasm for some other truth. Its exaggeration is inevitable, and excellent while it lasts ; it becomes pernicious only if it lasts too long.

The student of the history of Philosophy may at first be perplexed by the number of opposing systems, and the curious hostilities of the system-builders. But so soon as he turns from the field of history to investigate the human consciousness, and discovers the number of conflicting elements and tendencies that are there, he ceases to wonder at the diversities of the schools. The latter are but a sign of the fertility, the resource, and the wealth of human nature. The disparagement of the labours of predecessors, however,—which is a failing of many philosophers—will surprise and disappoint the student of their works ; more especially if he observes how much they have been indebted to their predecessors, if not for the hints which they have expanded, at least for the direction which their labours have taken. The explanation, however, is easy. The ability to do

justice to past systems of opinion is a rare intellectual quality, especially if it be combined with original genius and actual discovery. The ambition of founding or completing a system disinclines the mind to admit the humbling fact, that very much of what seems original has been already said, in another form, and that, there is exceedingly little that is new under the sun. Nevertheless, the illusion of originality has its uses. The original mind is spurred to research by the prospect of discovery. Were the re-appearance of an old system in a new dress or dialect to be surmised beforehand, one stimulus to continued speculative labour would be removed. In other words, the illusion of originality is a spur to philosophical activity.

The misrepresentation of former systems, however, to which I have alluded, itself explains the rise of new ones. Misconception of the nature or tendency of any doctrine usually provokes a reaction in its favour, and originates a desire to do it justice; and so the old opinion returns in a new form. It is true of systems as of individuals; they must be misconstrued, before they can develope their finest characteristics. They take deeper root, in the storm of adverse criticism. If all men spoke well of a speculative doctrine, it would be as injurious to its development, as universal praise would be hurtful to the character of its founder.

It is to be farther noted, that many philosophical systems differ in appearance, more than in reality. Their antagonism is on the surface; deeper down they unite. The difference may, as I have remarked, be simply one of emphasis, at the particular point where the stress of the system is laid. And this fact seems to me so important that I return to it. Two

systems, let us say, start from the same first principle. There they are at one. But the agreement is hidden, is subterranean. They proceed to develop what they hold in common; and what seems major to one, is minor to another, and *vice versa*. This sense of difference, intensified by every fresh glance towards the first principle, by slow degrees widens the breach. The emphasis repeated—like the slow modifications of organic structure, of which science has told us so much, and by which it has explained so much—results in the formation of a new opinion. If any one wishes to realize the latter process, let him study the law of natural selection and the survival of the fittest, in physical nature. If he wants to find that law confirmed, let him watch, by the light of history, the evolution of human opinion. Only let the stress continue to be laid on one side of a truth, which has two sides, both equally important; what is thus emphasized will beget a new type of opinion, which may grow into a product so unlike that from which it sprung, that the parentage and the derivation are scarcely recognisable. But the result will have been wholly due to a gradual increase of emphasis, thrown entirely on one side. And so, you will find that the most distinctive feature in each of the philosophical schools is admitted—in some form or other—by all the rest; only it is *subordinated* to other features which have the front place of honour.* For example, Socrates and the Sophists held much in common, and

* You may have to search for it in what I may call the crypts, or underground recesses of the system; but, if you do so, you will find—it may be concealed, or it may be almost obliterated—the very truth which forms the centre-point of the rival philosophical school.

their original conflict was due to the importance which the former attached to truths which the latter only subordinated. This is seen still more significantly in the conflict between the Stoics and the Epicureans, and pre-eminently in the great ethical controversy of the ages as to Freedom and Necessity.

Thus, when you criticise a particular system, and say, 'What So-and-so holds in A—referring to one part of his doctrine—cannot be reconciled with what he holds in B—referring to another part of it—his system is inconsistent,' what does the criticism mean but that he has taken more facts into account, than his system can rationally explain, or than he can make coherent? In other words, the man is larger than his system, his humanity is wider than his interpretation of human nature.

It may, and has been said, however, that whenever Eclecticism ceases to be a mere spirit of philosophizing, and becomes a system of philosophy, it is false to its own principle. In the very act of laying the foundations of a school, the eclectic becomes a sectarian, and thus commits an act of intellectual suicide. It is affirmed that Eclecticism should be a regulative principle in all systems, and the outcome of all, without being the distinctive badge of any one; that it should be a tendency rather than a school, a way of looking at systems of opinion that is sympathetic, fair-minded, and friendly, rather than antagonistic and critical. We must consider this objection.

That it should be a prevailing spirit in all philosophy, and that Eclecticism cannot crystallize into a dogma without belying its own principles, is undoubted. And farther, if it exists as a tendency or attitude, although ignored as a system, it is practically

of the greatest value. Hence its immense importance to the student of history. It supplies him with a double key, explanatory at once of the philosophy of History, and the history of Philosophy. But if, while the spirit of eclecticism guides the constructive labour of the system-builder, he still keeps to the groove of his system, and declines to assume the rôle of the eclectic, he remains sectarian. Either one of two things must result; he must keep to his system as a distinctive party badge, and disown what he will doubtless consider the vague position of the eclectic; or, his eclecticism must conquer his system. The intellectual quality of fair-mindedness has a front place in the hierarchy of the virtues; but it may exist as a tendency, without penetrating to the very core of the constructive reason, and moulding the system that results. The highest merit of eclecticism is its doing full justice to the systems that partially understand, yet formally repudiate it. As it is the supreme triumph of charity to include the uncharitable within the area it traverses, to see something good even in the intolerance that is persecuting, and that would if possible extinguish what it cannot comprehend; so, it is the crowning excellence of Eclecticism that it sees some latent good in the most *outré* and distorted system, that has ever disfigured the annals of civilization. But in its effort to do justice to every other doctrine, it has not always been just to itself. It has sometimes become a martyr to its own generosity. Hence it has been stigmatized as mild and diffusive, as the glorification of a weak live-and-let-live system. Many of those who esteem its tendency, despise it as a formulated theory; and while

the world refuses permanently to adopt any sectarian theory of knowledge or of life, it has never cordially welcomed the eclectics. It has shown a greater repugnance to acquiesce in this doctrine as the last word of Philosophy, than to adopt the sectarian extremes which Eclecticism tries to unite and reconcile. How is this? Can it be explained? Yes; the eclectic can explain it.

There can be no doubt that in proportion to the width and elasticity of a system is its want of fitness as a working theory of human knowledge and life, as a doctrine than can be applied to human affairs. So true is the maxim of Goethe, 'Thought widens, but lames; action narrows, but animates.' This is owing to the fact that all human action is, and must be, carried on in grooves. If we are to work in a world of limitations, we must submit to our limits, and not chafe under them. We may sit apart,

Holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all;

but when we do so, we retire from our place and our duties, in a world of imperfect action, and of necessarily incomplete fulfilment.

Now, constituted as we are, it is impossible for our intellectual vision, however wide the horizon it may sweep, to take in more than a very few and limited group of objects at the same time. Observe what results from this. It is the temporary prominence of one truth or fact or law, or of one group of truths facts and laws, which strike the eye of the beholder, arrest his attention, and rouse him to action. If he saw the other and bordering truths which balance the ones he sees, mitigating their force and regulating

their sway,—truths which other eyes are seeing while he does not,—he could scarcely be roused to the defence or upholding of the former ones. His enthusiasm would certainly cool, and his energy might collapse. Does any one imagine that if the child had in his childhood a presage of the wisdom of the man, he would shew any ardour in the pursuit of those ‘childish things’ which age sees to be illusory? So if the experientialist, the utilitarian, the ontologist, the idealist, were more eclectic than they usually are, if they saw the full merit of the systems they oppose,—while their denunciations would be less loud, and their antagonism less pronounced,—inaction, and perhaps indifference, might take the place of their former energy. It is not difficult to see why catholicity often leads to inaction; why toleration and supineness go hand in hand; and why, with the narrower vision of the sectarian thinker, is usually associated the propagandist ardour of the partizan.

From this we may deduce a corollary. In criticising extremes of opinion, which in their ultra forms are to be condemned, the main point is to recognise the mean, and intellectually to return to it, for the preservation of intellectual harmony; but to understand departure from it, not merely for the sake of action, but for the comprehension of the mean itself. Every time we act we depart from the mean, for the mean state is one of torpor and repose; but as in this world we must act in one way or another, we must vibrate from the equilibrium, crossing the line between extremes, while we never lose sight of this line, never permit the intellectual eye to be closed upon it. If, as I have already remarked, monotony would charac-

terize the beliefs of mankind were all the members of the human race to see eye to eye, the dreariest and most appalling results would follow if all men equally shunned the 'falsehood of extremes;' because it is the extremes that make the mean intelligible. Thus, the seemingly illogical position is reached, there is an advantage to the human race in its partial glimpses of truth, in its temporary, if it be not a stationary, one-sidedness in thought and action.

Here I must allude to a doctrine of Jouffroy, the distinguished follower of Cousin in the French eclectic school. He says that as truth and error are mixed in every system, if truth be one and error various, the variety of the systems is due to their departures from truth; and he even affirms that the succession of the schools is owing to the error they contain, each being a fugitive mirror of an out-reaching and over-reaching reality. I do not think that systems of opinion differ only in the erroneous elements they include. I would rather say that the distinctive badge of each is the particular truth, which it is its merit to have signalized, and made emphatic. The wise man searches for truth everywhere, and finds its fragments everywhere, but its entire presence nowhere. In every system he sees partial truth, dismembered, isolated; hence he is both a believer in evolution, and necessarily a student of history. Eclecticism and evolution go hand in hand. No consistent evolutionist can be other than eclectic. All systems having been evolved out of antecedent ones, and it being his function to trace the lineage and genealogy of each, they have an equal claim to be regarded with honour. Every link in the chain of derivation, being a necessary sequence, is worthy of

respect—a respect quite inconsistent with the railing of some evolutionists against certain intellectual products that have been evolved. According to their theory, as the glacier shapes the valley and the sea its beach, ancestral tendencies and uncontrollable contemporary forces shape the beliefs of the untoward generation that refuses to accept their doctrines. And why should they be more irritated at the philosophy or religion that surrounds them, than at the denudation of the valley, or the raising of the sea-beach?

I must, however, rebut the charge that Eclecticism and Scepticism go hand in hand; and this will lead both to a vindication of the claims of Philosophy, and to a further explanation of the rise and fall of 'systems' of opinion. The two admissions, that no system is final, and that none is exhaustive, carry with them the fundamental postulate of eclecticism; but this does not give to every system an equal rank, because an equal hold upon reality, or an equivalent value as a theoretical embodiment of the truth of things. It is true that if I call no philosopher 'master,' it is because *all* are masters within their respective spheres; and because other masters will yet arise to teach the generations of the future; while the sphere of truth itself outreaches every possible chart, which any of them may construct. One system or chart of the universe, however, is truer than another, not in proportion to the number of the elements in embraces, but in proportion to the accuracy with which it expresses and interprets the realities of the universe.

One advantage of a wise and sympathetic study of the history of opinion is, that it enables us to dispose satisfactorily of a charge which is often ignorantly

brought against the claims of philosophy. The popular charge is that it is a barren study, yielding no results that are demonstrably certain, and that can be taken for granted in the investigations of the future. The march of the physical sciences is pointed to, as one of consecutive conquest and progressive discovery, with no circular movements, or serpentine windings, or dubious returnings on former tracks. Even brilliant 'histories of philosophy' have been written with the aim of proving that Philosophy is an illusion. Its course is represented as a series of voyages by bold adventurers, on the illimitable waters, without ever touching or even seeing the 'happy isles,' and with many experiences of shipwreck and disaster.

In support of this, we are pointed to the rise and fall of the systems of philosophy; and we are asked either to select one system out of the conflicting multitude, and prove it to be orthodox, or to abandon the study as resultless.

The best, and the only satisfactory way of dealing with this objection is to apprehend the cause of the rise and fall of all the systems of the Universe, that have ever existed in the schools, or in the world outside the schools. If we clearly apprehend not only the reason why this or that opinion has happened to prevail at a particular time, but the source or origin of all systems, actual or possible, the reasonableness and the value of philosophical study will be self-evident. It will be seen to be, on the one hand, the study of the natural history of the human mind; and, on the other, the study of that problem, with which the human faculties have been incessantly occupied. Every system of Philosophy is a memorial of

the effort made by man to interpret that mysterious Text which the universe presents to his faculties for interpretation. It is an attempt to explain the fundamental or ultimate meaning of the things that environ us in the world without, and occur in the world within. It is thus *a theory of the meaning of Existence*; and every system that has appeared is a partial unfolding of the onward thought of humanity, directed to this problem—thought which is an organic and living whole, in constant motion and perpetual progress. We may safely hazard the assertion that there must be truth in *all* of these systems, if there is truth in *any one*. However defective it may be, each is a landmark, or index of progress. It has not only contributed to the development of the world's thought; it has been a necessary *part* of it.

And, for the same reason, it becomes superannuated, and passes away. No system can expand beyond a certain limit; but, while it ceases to flourish—and seems to pass away—what really happens is this. The development of human intellect and insight, which has been going on for a time in one direction, pauses *in that direction*, and begins to unfold itself along another line. It progresses by alternate ebb and flow, or by alternate beats of action and reaction. No 'system'—philosophical, religious, artistic, or social—can, in the nature of things, go on expanding for ever; any more than a tree, or a flower, can expand for ever. But the human mind continues to expand, the organic thought of the world continues to expand, the flowering of the general consciousness goes on; and all the systems, which record and register these, are merely historical memorials, by

which the rise of human intellect and feeling, in certain directions, and to a particular height, is marked. And so, the hope of attaining a finally perfect, or absolutely orthodox philosophy, a 'system' that shall compose the controversies of the ages, and end the strife of rival schools, is utopian. It is the fond illusion of speculative youth, which passes away in the more sober judgments of experience, especially if these judgments are formed under the light of history. And it passes away, not because truth is despaired of, because so little of it can be known; but because so much of it is seen, scattered everywhere in fragments.

If, therefore, the history of Philosophy shows the incessant swing of the pendulum of thought between opposite poles of opinion, if destructive systems are followed by constructive ones, if the sceptic again succeeds the dogmatist, if an idealistic reaction follows in the wake of every materialistic movement, the explanation is easy. It is not only that one extreme invariably gives rise to its opposite, and that the two always act and react upon each other; it is also that both are always present, within humanity itself. It is constantly forgotten that our 'systems of opinion' are only an illustration of certain permanent features or tendencies of human nature. They exhibit the upper or surface sign of an underworking current, which is ceaselessly moving on, often quite unknown to the system-makers—like those vast tidal waves, of the rise and fall of which the voyager on the Atlantic is wholly unconscious. The reason why one and another 'system' is dominant, and the reason why they all reappear (after falling for a time into the

shade), is that they represent ineradicable phases of human thought, and are, therefore, uneliminable factors or elements in human civilisation. It is thus that the doctrines of the world's youth reappear in its age, that the systems of ancient India are seen in modern Germany, and that the thought of the old Greek sages has a resurrection in Oxford and Berlin. If any symbol is permissible in Philosophy it is that of the phoenix.

Perhaps the most signal service which Eclecticism has rendered to the cause of human progress is the new way of looking at history, and the historical schools, which it has introduced. A wide knowledge of the history of opinion has often given rise to a doctrine of catholic comprehension, rather than of sectarian exclusion, in philosophical theory ; and although all historians may have their bias, no study is more helpful to width of mental view, or is more emphatically the parent of fair-mindedness. But the benefit is reciprocal. If historical study promotes Eclecticism, by shewing that its basis is broadly laid in the region of fact and event, the eclectic spirit is one of the best safeguards to the historian. It preserves him from the taint of partizanship. It animates the study of the driest details with living interest, by connecting them with their causes and their issues. It has done immense service to human progress by showing that the true function of the historical critic is not so much to expose illusions, as to ascertain their origin ; to rise above, by getting behind them ; and to discover the living root whence error has sprung, and of which it is the distortion. It is thus opposed to every form of iconoclasm. In so far as our liberal teachers and

thinkers are iconoclasts, in so far as they are irreverent towards the past or towards the present, they are non-eclectic, sectarian, revolutionary ; and the practical merit of the system I have been expounding—a merit probably greater than the most perfect theoretical consistency would be—is its large tolerance, its spirit of conciliation, rather than of compromise, and its detection of truth underneath all the exaggeration, distortion, and caricature of the systems that have emerged.

PERSONALITY AND THE INFINITE.

READ TO THE NEW SPECULATIVE SOCIETY, SCOTLAND, MARCH 1875.

(*The Contemporary Review*, October 1876.)

It is one of the most noticeable facts in the history of opinion that speculative doctrines, which become sharply antagonistic when carried to their legitimate results, are found to harmonize at the root from which they spring. There, they may even touch each other; and, in their origin, be no more than a way of throwing emphasis on this or that phase of a mutually accepted fact; while their developed conclusions may be as wide as the poles asunder. It has been said that opposite errors have usually a common *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*. It is perhaps truer to affirm that all antagonistic theories take their rise from an underlying root of truth. The history of philosophy, which exhibits the ceaseless swing of the pendulum of thought toward opposite sides,—a movement which we have no reason to wish should ever end, for its cessation would imply the paralysis of the human mind,—shows how easily differences, which are trivial at their first appearance, develop into distinctive schools of opinion, and how rapidly they are confirmed by the reaction and antagonism of rival systems.

The question, whether the Supreme Being, or ulti-

mate Existence within the universe, is in any sense personal—whether it can be legitimately spoken of, and interpreted by us, in the terms in which we speak of, and interpret our own personality, is as old as the discussions of the Eleatics in Greece; and from Parmenides to Hegel it has been solved in one way, while from the Jewish monotheists, through the entire course of Christian theology, it has been answered in another.* If the most recent discussions of the subject in contemporary literature contribute little to the solution of this controversy of the ages, they have the merit of presenting the perennial problem in a singularly clear light; and they prove how the most abstruse questions of human knowledge continue to fascinate the heart, and to tax the intellect of man, while they directly affect his practical life.

The late David Frederick Strauss, and our most brilliant literary critic—Mr Matthew Arnold—have each written strongly against the notion of personality in God; the former, consistently developing the Hegelian doctrine, which he has applied to the problems of religious history; the latter, endeavouring to lay the basis of a new reverence for the Bible, through a phenomenal psychology and doctrine of ignorance, in those delightful, though confessedly unsystematic, papers, contributed to this REVIEW, full of delicate and happy criticism, though dashed too much with *persiflage*, and scarcely grave enough when the radical importance of the question is considered, in

* National temperament and racial tendency have had their influence in determining the character of these answers. The instinct of the Semitic races has tended in one direction; that of the Aryan, or Indo-European, in another.

connection with the literature of solemn speculation on the subject.

Mr Arnold has been telling us that we must give up and renounce for ever the delusion that God is 'a person who thinks and loves.' We are to recognise instead 'a stream of tendency, by which all things fulfil the law of their being;' a 'power that lives and breathes and feels,' but not 'a person who thinks and loves.' We are directed, as all the world knows, to 'the eternal not-ourselves that makes for righteousness.' But does this curious entity, this 'eternal not-ourselves,' present a more adequate notion to the intellect than that which it is meant to displace? Is it less ambiguous, or less hypothetical? We are asked to substitute for the exploded notion of a personal God a negative entity, of which all that can with certainty be affirmed is that it is 'not we ourselves,' that it is beyond us and eternal. All else is to be set aside as personification and poetry, or 'extra-belief.' But would not an 'eternal-in-ourselves' making for righteousness be a more intelligible, an equally relevant, and equally verifiable notion? And how do we know it to be 'eternal,' but by an *a priori* process, which the new philosophy would disown? We are supposed to be conducted, by the help of this definition, out of the dim regions of theological haze, to the *terra firma* of verifiable knowledge. Is it then, less intricate and confusing than the old historic conception, which it is intended to supplant? No one, it is said, 'has discovered the nature of God to be personal, or is entitled to assert that God *has* conscious intelligence.' But we are told to look to 'the constitution and history of things,' where we find an 'eternal ten-

dency' at work 'outside of us, prevailing whether we will or no, whether we are here or not ;' and that, if we look we shall find, that this eternal *non-ego* 'makes for righteousness.'

The special merit which the new definition claims for itself is that it is a luminous one, and that it is within the range of experience, where it can be tested and verified. Now, in this demand for verification, Mr Arnold either wishes our religious philosophy to be recast in terms of the exact sciences, and nothing accepted in the sphere of psychology and metaphysic, which cannot be reached as we reach conclusions in mathematics ; or he is stating a philosophical commonplace, viz., that moral truth is not susceptible of demonstrative evidence. Are not the terms he makes use of, however, both loose and deceptive ? This 'making for righteousness' is meant to describe the action of a vast impersonal tendency, everywhere operative towards that end. But surely all our experience of 'tendency' in the direction of righteousness is personal. Observation of the results of human action, of the consequences of wrong-doing and of righteous conduct respectively, shows that certain causes, set in motion by ourselves or by others, issue in certain subjective effects. If we confine ourselves to the sphere of experience, we not only get no further than the observation of phenomena, but all the succession we observe is personal ; because it is the field of human conduct alone that is before us. Further, in thus limiting ourselves, another fact arrests our notice. If there be a stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, there is also a stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes

for wickedness. There are two streams of tendency flowing through the universe, into one or other of which all the lesser rills of moral influence flow. We can trace their fluctuating course, from the earliest ages to the present time; but what the better are we of either, as a solution of the ultimate problem of the universe? If we confine ourselves to the limited area open to inductive inference, and the verifications of experience, we cannot reach the conclusion that there is a single stream of tendency, not ourselves and beneficent, which makes for righteousness alone. If certain phenomena seem to warrant this inference, counter-appearances suggest, with equal force, the operation of a malignant power, making persistently for evil; and with two antagonist forces in perpetual collision, the Manichean doctrine is reached, and the conditions of ditheism are surely complete.

Returning to the formula against which Mr Arnold has directed so many acute shafts of criticism, viz., that God is 'a person who thinks and loves,' I have no hesitation in accepting it as a substantially accurate definition of what is held by the majority of theists; although, perhaps few would state it in these terms, and it is liable to misconception, chiefly through the use of the indefinite article! If Mr Arnold were merely cautioning us against identifying our notion of what constitutes personality in God, with our concept of personality in man—if his teaching on this point were but a warning against the popular tendency to assume, either that human nature was an adequate measure of the Divine, or that it afforded our only light as to the characteristics of the Divine—it would be

most salutary; although it would be merely a continuation of the familiar message of the seers of Israel, a modern echo of the prophetic voices of the Hebrew Church, when they affirmed that He is 'not altogether such an one as ourselves.' It amounts, however, to much more than this. It is an echo of the dogma, which lies at the heart of every monistic system of speculation; viz., that there is a radical inconsistency, or contradiction, between the notions of the Personal and the Infinite, so that we cannot combine both, in a concept which conserves the characteristics of each; but must, in logical consistency, surrender the one, or the other; that, in short, if God be a person, He cannot be infinite; and if infinite, He must be impersonal. Personality is regarded as, in all cases, essentially limited, and necessarily bounded. In the human race, the personality of each man is supposed to consist in the isolation from his fellows; and it is inferred that all personality consists in a gathering together of self, at a centre or focus of individuality; that it is realizable and real, only in its separation from, and exclusion of, other things; while it is affirmed that the Absolute and Infinite are all-embracing, and all-surrounding, excluding nothing, but enfolding within themselves the totality of existence. Therefore, it is said, if there be an infinite and absolute Being in the universe, nothing else can exist beside Him. He will take up and include within himself, all existence whatsoever; but, in so doing, he cannot be personal; for the personal is always the bounded, the fenced, the separate, the enclosed.

To put the difficulty, which the theistic solution presents, in its strongest light, I restate the problem

thus. Endeavouring to realize the infinite, whether in space or in time, we may begin by imagining circles beyond circles, systems vaster and still vaster, lines of continuous succession unbroken by any point or interval. We rise on the wings of imagination, and pursue the journey till our thought sinks paralyzed. But in so doing, we have never really got one step beyond the finite. By such imaginative flights along the lines of sequence, or over areas of space, we never approach one whit nearer to the Infinite; because the vastest conceivable aggregate of finites is not really liker it, than is the unit from which we start, in the process of multiplication. The one is but the other 'writ large.' Therefore, we may not only reach the notion as well, before the journey of finite thought commences; but if we reach it at all, it must be by a process wholly different from an expansion of the finite, and by the exercise of another faculty than imagination. We may do so, however, in a moment, not by a multiplication of the finite, but by its elimination; not by enlarging the notion, but by abolishing it. All conceivable finites being before the mind, as an indefinite quantity, we may say with Herder, 'These I remove, and thou—the Infinite—liest all before me.' Thus our thought of the Infinite is not a pictorial or concrete realization of it as a mental image, built up out of elements furnished by sense-experience, or imaginatively bodied forth on the inner horizon of the mind. We do not reach it by a synthetic process, piecing together a multitude of finite things, sweeping round them, and imagining them in their totality. But, we at once and directly think away all limitation, and abolish the finite, by excluding individual deter-

minate things, from a field pre-occupied by thought. Now, with this idea of the Infinite—as the negation of the finite—it seems difficult to conjoin the notion of anything whatever that is personal ; for personality manifests itself to us familiarly, under the restrictions of finite form ; and as the one notion becomes clear, the other usually grows dim. It is difficult to conjoin the notion of personality even with that of the indefinitely vast. As you approach the latter, the former seems to recede. Is there an intellectual stereoscope, through which the two notions may be seen, blent in the unity of a single conception ? The defined idea of personality, and the shadowy notion of the infinite, may be bracketed together under a common term, which expresses them both ; can they be also *thought* in conjunction ? and have we any warrant for the inference that they do actually coalesce in the supreme existence, which we call God ?

All that we seem warranted in affirming is that personality is one of the characteristics, under which the Supreme Being manifests himself ; not that it is exhaustive of the phases of manifestation, that are either possible, or actual. If we say that it is the highest aspect known to us, we speak in a figure, and proclaim the poverty of our insight. For, to the Infinite, there is nothing either high or low. These are ratios of comparison by which the finite calculates. We give to the notion of personality an eminence and value that are unique, because, amongst the phenomena of the universe, it seems to us the noblest and the most commanding. But it is not, of necessity, the exclusive idea attachable to the Divine Nature. That, within the fulness of its infinitude, there should be aspects,

phases, features, characteristics, which are totally unlike and utterly transcending the personality of which we are conscious, is a simple deduction from that infinitude.

With entire consistency, therefore, we may affirm at once the personality, and the transcendency of God; that is to say, we may affirm that He is a person, as we understand the term, and that He is *more* than a person, as we understand it. We cannot limit the aspects, which his Being may assume, to the phases which our own natures present, any more than we may narrow the limits of his efficiency within the boundaries of our own. If we believe that everything, distinctive of human personality, exists in God, in more exalted phases; we are also forced to believe that infinitely more, that is different from it, co-exists within that nature. In other words, though we recognise certain features within the Divine infinitude, analogous to the personality of which we are conscious, it does not follow that we may identify the two, and take the human as an absolute measure of the Divine. It is true we may err by taking a poor and circumscribed notion, gathered from the workings of our own faculties, and substituting it for the glory that is impersonal, and the order that is eternal; but that danger is not so great, as is the counter-risk of losing the personal altogether, in the nebulous haze of the infinite. The divine Absoluteness is lost to view, if we think merely of an infinite human being; and God is as truly discerned in the life, the movements, and the glory of the universe, which we cannot call human—in the absolute Order, the eternal Beauty, the impersonal Sublimity, and the indefinite Splendour which

we can describe by no human attribute or tendency—as He is revealed in the wisdom, the tenderness, the grace, and the affection that are properly our own.

Further, were we warranted in taking human nature as the sole interpreter of the Divine, we might regard it also as its criterion and test; carrying up its mingled moral phenomena, and finding their archetypes in celestial tendencies to evil as well as to good. It is the notion, that the sphere of finite existence supplies an area for inductive inference as to the procedure of the Absolute, that has given rise to so many of the distortions of popular theology.

What then is our warrant for assuming an *analogy*, which does not amount to an *identity*, and in thus affirming the existence of a Personality at once real and transcendent, or—if we may venture on the distinction—human, yet not anthropomorphic?

The radical feature of personality, as known to us—whether apprehended by self-consciousness, or recognized in others—is the survival of a permanent self under all the fleeting or deciduous phases of experience; in other words the personal identity, which is involved in the assertion, “I am.” While my thoughts, feelings, and acts, pass away and perish, I continue to exist, to live, and to grow in the fulness of experience. Beneath the shows of things, the everlasting flux and reflux of phenomenal change, a substance or interior essence survives. Now, limitation is not a necessary adjunct of *that* notion. There may not only be an everlasting succession of thoughts, emotions, and volitions—acts of consciousness in perpetual series,—while the substantial and permanent self remains, underneath the evanescent phenomena; but the thought, feeling,

&c., may have an infinite range, and be all-pervasive and interpenetrating at every spot within the universe. Limitation does not directly enter into the notion of personality. The *action* of a personal being is limited by the material on which he works, by his surroundings and circumstances; and our personalities are limited by other things, because they surround us; but if we surrounded them, and pervaded all finite things by omnipresent energy, the limitation would be simply a mode of action, and a condition of activity. It does not therefore follow, from our experience of limitation, that in being conscious, the conscious nature must be invariably limited by the presence and environment of others. It may be unlimited in act, unshackled by conditions, spontaneous in all it does, although it acts through the instrumentality and agency of others.

To state the question otherwise; Is separateness from other existences equivalent to finitude? Does the one notion carry the other with it, or within it? All finite existences *are* separate, one from another; but it does not follow that all existence, that is separate from others, must be finite. The infinite existence, which we conceive as the simple negation of the finite, may nevertheless pervade it, in an unlimited manner; and the idea of a fence or boundary is not involved in the notion of Personality in the abstract, although it is involved in the notion of finite personality. It does not therefore follow that, if a being is personal, it must on that account, be simply one out of many—differentiated from others, by reason of its personality. Its personality is not the cause of its separateness and differentiation. It cannot exist out

of all relation to other beings ; for all *existence* (or the emergence of being in definite forms and relations) implies separateness from others. But though particular existence is what it is, in virtue of other existences determining and conditioning it—and we, in our limitation, cannot be conscious of our own personality, except under the condition of a *non-ego* beyond us—it is quite an illegitimate inference from this to affirm that personality cannot exist at all, or be consciously realized at all, except under the condition of a limiting *non-ego*. It is conceivable that the *non-ego* would vanish, in the case of a being that was transcendent and a life that was all-pervasive. That the dualism, involved in all finite consciousness, should cease in the case of the Infinite, may be difficult to realise ; but to affirm that, in all cases, self-consciousness implies a centre, or focus, at which the scattered rays of individuality are gathered up, is assuredly to transgress, by the unwarranted use of a physical analogy.


I quote from Strauss, who always states his case with force and clearness :—

“The modern monotheistic conception of God has two sides, that of the Absolute and that of the Personal, which, although united in Him, are so in the same manner as that in which two qualities are sometimes found in one person, one of which can be traced to the father's side, the other to the mother's. The one element is the Hebrew Christian, the other the Greco-philosophical contribution to our conception of God. We may say that we inherit from the Old Testament the ‘Lord-God,’ from the New the ‘God-Father,’ but from the Greek philosophy the ‘Godhead,’ or the ‘Absolute.’”*

So far well, and excellently put. But if it be so, if these notions—seemingly incompatible—are united in

* Old and New Faith, p. 121.

our modern monotheism 'in the same manner as two qualities are sometimes found in one person,' does not that mitigate the difficulty of realising both as combined in one transcendent Personality? As two streams of hereditary influence unite to form one river of personality in a single individual, and as two great conceptions of God have survived in the world, and alternately come to the front in the mind of the race (call them, for distinction's sake, the Hebraic and the Hellenic), cannot these be supposed to unite in one vast stream of Transcendent Being? And are not the two conceptions merely different ways of *interpreting* that supreme Existence, which both equally recognize? But, if we inherit these notions from the sources which Strauss so happily indicates, why proceed to disown one half of the inheritance, and cast out the Jewish as airy and unverifiable, while the Greek is retained as the real and the scientific? If we are indebted to both, why refuse one half of the legacy? or construe it as the ghostly shadow, and the other as the enduring substance? Was not the monotheism of the Jew at least a historical discipline to the human consciousness, in the interpretation of a real side of the mystery, which, in its fulness, eluded him, as much as it baffled the Greek ontologists? Was it not at least as luminous and satisfying a translation of that mysterious text, which the ever-changeful universe presented to both? Grant that the Jewish notion of personality degenerated at times into an anthropomorphism that was crude, and scarcely more elevated than the polytheism it supplanted. Nevertheless, the emphasis which it laid on the distinction and separateness of God from the world was part of the historic education of the race;



just as the emphasis which the Greek mind laid on the unity, which underlies all separateness, was another part of that many-sided education.

But the supposition that 'personality implies a limit' is largely due to the physical or semi-physical notions, that have gathered round the idea of a throne, on which a monarch is seated. If we give up this notion of a throne, a 'court,' and 'a retinue of angels,' and even renounce that of a local heaven as an 'optical illusion,' we shall not thus 'lose every attribute of personal existence and action,' as Strauss tells us we must. Every rational theist, nay every thoughtful man, understands that these ideas are the mere symbolical drapery, which has been wrapped around the spiritual notion by the realistic imagination of the Jews. The whole of the sensuous imagery under which the Divine Nature is portrayed, as well as the material figures which are inlaid in every sentence in which we speak of the spiritual, are mere aids to the imaginative faculty. They are the steps of a ladder, on which we rise in order that we may transcend the symbols—just as we find that a realization of indefinite areas of space, or intervals of time, helps us in the transcendent act by which we think away the finite, and reach the infinite. But that God is, to quote the ancient formula, 'All in the whole and all in every part' (as the soul is in the body), not localised at any centre—this is one of the commonplaces of theology. The notion of the Oriental mind, which has coloured much of our Western theology, that such symbols as those associated with royalty must be taken literally, and not as the 'figures of the true,' is expressly rejected in some of the definitions of the Church itself. And further, there is scarcely an idea

connected with the monotheism of the Jews, such as king, judge, lawgiver, father, in reference to which there are not express statements within the sacred books of the nation, cautioning it against a *literal* application of these terms to the Infinite. The prophets saw their inadequacy, and felt their poverty, while they used them. Yet they could not avoid using them. They could not speak to the mass of the nation in other than symbolic language, any more than the leaders of the Greek schools could have dispensed with their esoteric, and made the crowds in the agora understand speculation on pure being. If we are to speak of God at all in human words, we must employ the inadequate medium of metaphoric speech; and 'jealousy to resist metaphor' does not, as Francis Newman says, 'testify to depth of insight.'* In their horror of anthropomorphism, ontologists have rarefied their notion of the ultimate principle of existence into a mere abstraction, a blank formless essence, a mere vacuum. But, in making free use of anthropomorphic language, we are aware that it is necessarily partial, and wholly inadequate: and we exclude from our notion of personality, which it thus imperfectly describes, every anthropomorphic feature that savours of limitation; while we retain the notion of a Being, who is personal and yet infinite.

That personality cannot co-exist with infinity is a groundless assumption, without speculative warrant or experiential proof. Let us see. It is essential to all

* 'To refuse to speak of God as loving and planning, as grieving and sympathizing, without the protest of a *quasi*, will not tend,' he adds, 'to clearer intellectual views (for what can be darker?) but will muddy the springs of affection.'—*The Soul*, p. 29.




personality that the person "thinks and loves," as Mr Arnold puts it. But are thought and emotion only susceptible of finite action, and adequate to effect finite ends? Or, if the stream to which they give rise is limited, may not the fountain whence they flow be infinite? Can we not realize the existence of a Supreme Personality, within which the whole universe lives, moves, and has its being, and which has that universe as an area, in which to manifest its thought, feeling, and purpose? May not that intelligence, traces of which we see everywhere in the physical order—that purpose, in the manifestation of which there is no gap or chasm anywhere—be the varying index of an omnipresent Personality? Into thought and emotion themselves the idea of restriction does not enter; although, whenever they appear in special acts or concrete instances, they assume a finite form. They are then limited by each other, and by their opposites, as well as by every specific existence in which they respectively appear. But to themselves in the abstract the idea of limitation no more appertains, than it is necessarily bound up with the notion of power or energy. This, however, is to anticipate.

We are deceived when we carry into the realm of Nature and the Infinite, the analogy of a material centre and a physical circumference, by which our own personality is 'cabined and confined.' To the infinite, there can be neither centre nor circumference; or we may say that the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. But if the attributes of mind or intelligence are revealed throughout the whole extent of the universe open to our inspection, is it impossible to conjoin with the notion of their infinite range, the

idea of a Person to whom they belong, in whom they inhere, and of whose essence they are the many-sided manifestation? Is there any greater difficulty in supposing their conjunction over the whole universe, than in realizing their coincidence at any one spot within it? It is assuredly not the mere extent of the area that constitutes the difficulty of their conjunction.

We thus come back to what has, in some form or another, lain at the root of every theistic argument. Is the universe in any sense intelligible? Can it be read, understood, and interpreted by us at all? or does it present an 'untranslatable text,' which we in vain attempt to decipher? When we say that phenomena are *organized*—what do we mean by the statement? When we speak of them as correlated, reciprocal, ordered, the parts of a whole—what do we mean by these terms? We are not projecting our own thoughts outwards, on the face of external nature: we are engaged in deciphering an inscription that is written there. We are interpreting an objective reality. Even in the simplest act of perception, distinguishing one phenomenon from another, we virtually assume the presence of mind within the universe; and in our knowledge of an external world, we have an experience suggesting the theistic inference.

One solution of the problem of theism may thus be found in the answer which we give to the question, Are we warranted in interpreting the universe in terms of intelligence? We are accustomed to think, both popularly and scientifically, that we know something of Nature; and we co-ordinate our knowledge in the several sciences. But they all start from the pre-



supposition, that we do not project our own thought into Nature, but that natural phenomena are themselves intelligible to us. And all the departmental groups of knowledge take for granted a general doctrine of the knowable. We speak as aimlessly in our most exact and scientific language as if we talked at random, if we do not find thought and reason, within all natural phenomena, as their substrate, their essence, or their presupposition. Even if we profess to be agnostics, and take refuge in a confession of ignorance, under the seeming modesty which disclaims insight, there lurks a latent doctrine of knowledge. If we hold that all knowledge reaches us through the senses, that we possess nothing higher than 'transformed sensations,' behind this theory of the origin of our ideas in experience there still lies the uneliminable element which transcends it, and which is unconsciously taken for granted in every theoretical explanation of things as they are. If therefore mind be legible in nature, and we cannot construe a single phenomenon or group of phenomena otherwise than in terms of intelligence, our interpretation is not the result of unconscious idealization. It is the discernment of objective reality, the recognition of the eternal mind, in the everlasting processes of manifestation.

Finding everywhere the signs of mind, in the correlations and successions of phenomena, we interpret the whole series, as the manifestation of a personal essence underlying it; for of mind that is impersonal we cannot form a notion. Do not all the forms of finite being, the specializations of existence, and the successions of phenomena, lead to the conclusion that there is a Supreme Essence in which every specializa-

tion is lost, a whole in which all succession is merged? Does not every series or succession of parts lead the mind directly to a 'unity, where no division is?' Is it not the case that we cannot rest in the particular and the fragmentary, because these are evanescent? But if we interpret the individual and the fragmentary in terms of intelligence, surely we cannot dispense with it when we rise to that supreme Unity, in which variety ceases, and multiplicity is lost.

It is true that we do not know what constitutes the inmost essence of personality, under all the shifting phases of experience; and, on that account, there is an element of vagueness attaching to the idea. But we are aware that our own identity or self-hood survives, while the successive waves of experience rise and fall: and, that the Eternal Essence or everlasting Substance of the universe should be supremely conscious of self, through the ceaseless change and turmoil of creation, is conceivable enough. It may be that infinitude alone supplies the condition for a perfect consciousness of personality; and that our finiteness, as Lotze teaches, is 'not a productive condition of personality, but rather a hindering barrier to its perfect development.'* If there is a difficulty in thus conceiving of a personality which can dispense with a *non-ego*, as the condition of its activity—which does not necessarily involve the distinction between self and not-self—and if, in consequence, we are unable to compress our belief in the Divine Personality within the mould of a logical formula, 'let it' (as Mr Greg says of the belief in immortality), 'let it rest in the vague, if you would have it rest unshaken;' 'it is

* *Microcosmus*, iii. p. 575.

maintainable so long as it is suffered to remain nebulous and unoutlined.' The very grandeur of the term 'God' consists in the fact that it includes, not less but so much more, than any specific description could embrace within it. The reality transcends every definition of it; and our various theoretical explanations of the fact—which appeals to our consciousness unceasingly, and in forms so manifold—are just so many ways by which we successively register our own insight. We put into intelligible shape a conviction, which, the moment we define it, is felt to transcend our definitions immeasurably.

But are our definitions ever correct? Are they accurate so far as they go, while admittedly incomplete? They may be so, without claiming to be either final, or exhaustive of that which they endeavour to define. They are the result of the efforts of the reason to formulate, or reduce to intellectual shape, a conviction which has several distinct roots, but which is not invariable, or steadily luminous, or always irresistible. From the very nature of the case, the Divine Personality must be *suggested*, rather than evidenced with indubitable force. If we can, by reason, scatter the *a priori* difficulties which seem to gather round the notion itself, it may be left to the workings of intuition to reveal the positive fact, *a posteriori*, in the flash of occasional inspiration. If the Divine Presence were obtruded upon the inward eye, as material objects appeal to the sense of sight, the faculties which recognise it would be dazzled, and unable to note or register anything besides. Our recognition of God must therefore be casual, fugitive, occasional, to leave room for our knowledge of, and relation to, other exist-

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ences. Were it continuous and uniform, it would degenerate to the common level of our consciousness of finite things and material existence. In its fugitiveness and its transiency lies one feature of its divineness. And therefore, that there should be endless discussion, and the perpetual shock of controversy in reference to it, is only to be expected. If the aspects under which God is revealed vary perpetually, if He at once surrounds and pervades us, yet withdraws from our gaze, the everlasting controversy of the ages, and the rise and fall of systems which now assert and now dispense with his presence, are most easily explained; and the perpetual resuscitation of debate (after solutions have been advanced by the score) is proof of the working of an instinct which rises higher than these proofs themselves. They are, all of them—ontological, cosmological, teleological, and the rest) merely historical memorials of the efforts of the human mind *to vindicate to itself the existence of a Reality, of which it is conscious, but which it cannot perfectly define.* In their completest forms, they are simply the result of the activity of the reason and the conscience combined, to account for that Reality, and to define it to others.

Thus, that our consciousness of the Divine Personality is often dormant, says nothing against its reality or trustworthiness, when it is stirred to life. It rather tells the other way. What is ceaselessly obtruded on our notice is not more true, by reason of its obviousness, than what is flashed upon it in moments of transient ecstasy or insight. We are not always on the mountain-tops. We cannot breathe the ethereal air for ever, or live in the white light of a never-

ceasing apocalypse. But these are surely the supreme moments of discernment. No one can rationally affirm that the duller flats of mental life—in which our powers are arrested and distracted by a multiplicity of objects surrounding them, our thoughts embarrassed by contingency and change—are more significant of the truth of things, than those in which our faculties are kindled into life, by the sense of a Reality appealing to them, and yet concealing itself from their scrutiny. Nor will the general consciousness of the race admit that these are times of mere idealistic trance, and poetic illusion. Rather are they times of inspiration, in which we see beyond appearances, and beneath all semblance, into the inner life of things.

The question has so many sides that, at the risk of some repetition, it may be restated thus. It is said that a definite limitation is involved in all activity, and that, if there be an infinite Personality, it is doomed to everlasting repose, without act or sign of energy; for to act is to be limited by the conditions of activity. It is said that every specific mode of energy, which takes shape in a determinate form is, *ipso facto*, limited; that Power emerging from its latent state, and *showing itself* in the theatre of finite existence, limits itself, by its very relation to the things on which it operates; and that therefore it is only the indeterminate that is strictly the unlimited and infinite. But, in the first place, is not power in its latent state—*i.e.* unmanifested, unspecialized in a concrete form—more limited in its retirement, and hampered by its seclusion, than it would be in its energy and activity? *Character* is not limited by the special acts in which it is revealed. On the contrary, the more varied its

features, the greater and fuller is the character. It is not the absence of definite characteristics that proves one nature to be richer than another, but their number, their intensity, their manifoldness, and their range. In the second place, a limit may be self-imposed ; and if so, it is simply one of the conditions under which alone power can manifest itself. Resistance reveals power, by giving an opportunity for energy to overcome the barrier. Power unresisted is power unmanifested, and may be conceived of as latent heat ; but it is the presence of some obstacle to be overcome which shows the power of that which subdues it, in the very act of yielding and being overthrown. It may be conceded that whenever power is put in exercise, and issues in a definite act, it is limited by its relation to other acts ; inasmuch as it immediately becomes one of the million links, in the chain of finite things. But the fountain-head of energy, whence the act has come forth to play its part in the theatre of existence, is unaffected by that limitation. In short, the act may be limited, while the Agent is not. In the third place, the actual conditions under which we live, and under which our personality works, prove that the existence of a barrier in some directions enlarges, deepens, and widens our personality in others ; for example, the limitation or restriction involved in all duty. And this is not due merely to the law of compensation, and to the fact that what is lost on one side is gained on another ; but it is because, without the limit, or the constraint, the highest form of activity could not possibly exist.

Perhaps the chief difficulty is experienced, however, not when we attempt to construe to our minds the

existence of the Divine Personality alone, but when we try to conceive it in its relation to humanity; when we endeavour in fact to realize the *co-existence* of the Infinite with the finite. So long as we think only of the Infinite, there is no logical puzzle, and the intellectually consistent scheme of pantheism emerges; so long again as we think only of the finite, there is no dilemma, though we seem locked in the embrace of an atheistic system. But try to combine the infinite with the finite—the former being not the mere expansion of the latter, but its direct negation—and, in the dualism, which their union forces upon us, a grave difficulty seems to lurk. What is the relation, which the innumerable creatures that exist, bear to the all-surrounding Essence? It cannot be similar to that which the planets bear to the sun, round which they revolve; for the sun is only a vaster finite, like its satellites: and God + the universe is not a sum of being, equivalent to that of the sun + the planetary bodies. How then can there be two substances, a finite and an infinite? Does not the latter necessarily quench the former by its very presence? As a child of four years once put it, “If God be everywhere, how could there be any room for us?”

We must admit that if God be “the sum of all reality” (as the Eleatics, the later Platonists, Erigena, Spinoza, and Hegel have maintained), then, since we are a part of that sum, we are necessarily included within the Divine essence. Further, if there be but one substance in the universe, and all the phenomena of the human consciousness, together with those of the external world, are but the varying phases which that single reality assumes; then, it matters not what we

call it—a force, a cause, a person, a substance, a life, God—all that *is*, is *of it*. This is the pantheistic solution of the problem, which has fascinated so many of the subtlest minds. It has, of course, been met by the doctrine of creation in time, or the origination of finite existence at a particular instant by the fiat of a Creator. Many believe this to be essential to theism, and are afraid that if we allow a perpetual cosmos, we must dispense with an eternal God, except as an *opifex mundi*; that if we do not affirm the origin of the universe *ex nihilo*, we are unable to maintain the separateness of God from it, and his transcendency. I see no warrant for this. To affirm that without an absolute start of existence, out of blank nonentity into manifested being, we have no evidence of God at all, or only the signs of an eternally hampered Deity—a mere supplement to the sum of existence—is altogether illegitimate. For the evidence of Divine action would then be dependent on the signs of past effort, or the occurrence of a stupendous stroke, crisis, or start of energy. Why may not the story of the universe be rather interpreted as *the everlasting effect of an eternal Cause*? Do we need an origin in time, if we have a perpetual genesis, or a ceaseless becoming co-eval with the everlasting cause? Which is the grander, which the more realizable notion, to suppose Nature at one moment non-existent, and the next ‘flashed into material reality at the fiat of Deity,’ or to suppose it eternally plastic under the power of an Artificer, who is perpetually fashioning it, through all the cycles of progressive change? It is not the actual entrance or the possible exit of existence that we have to explain, but

its manipulations, the rise of organizations and their decay, the evolution and succession of varied types of life; and it is precisely these which attest the presence of an indwelling and immediately acting God.

Dualism, therefore, finds its speculative warrant, not in any assumed act of creation, but in the eternal necessities of the case, in the double element involved in all knowledge, and such experiential facts as those of sense-perception and intuition generally.

To get rid of the dualism of monotheistic theory, which seemed to him to limit the Infinite, Spinoza adopted the old monistic position; holding God and nature to be but the eternal cause and the everlasting effect, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. This theory, however, affords no explanation of how the mind of man blossoms into a consciousness of the Infinite, of how the finite knower reaches his conception of the Infinite; because, according to the theory, all that is reached by the mind of the knower is itself a development of the infinite. The psychological act of recognition is itself only a wave on the sea of existence. Dualism explains the apprehension of the one by the other, in its affirmation that all our knowledge is obtained under the conditions of contrast and difference, and thus reaches us in pairs of opposites. It does not affirm that, in order to the consciousness of personality in the Infinite, there must of necessity be a recognition of self and not-self, of self and the universe; but it affirms that to the finite knower it must be so; that to him subject implies object, and the *ego* the *non-ego*; that the two are given together, and are realizable only in union. On every monistic theory of the universe, however, the

question 'Where is God to be found?' is meaningless; the 'search for God' is a contradiction in terms; because the seeker and the search, the quest and the *quæditor* and the *quæsitum*, are all manifestations of one and the same substance. Dualism is involved in the very notion of a search.

Further, to take for granted that the Infinite is that which quenches the finite, which abolishes and absorbs it, is to beg the whole question in debate. This supersession of the finite by the Infinite is speculatively as illegitimate as is the acosmism of Spinoza. It is true that we reach the *idea* of the infinite by removing the finite out of the way. But then the act of exclusion or absorption, being an act of thought, constitutes one term of a relation. If we can think of the infinite at all, we have a mental concept which stands contrasted with that of the finite, and thus again dualism emerges. Although our conception of the infinite is reached by the abolition of the finite, it does not follow that if an Infinite Being exists, no finite can co-exist with it. For the latter is not only given as the prior fact of consciousness, but when we proceed to eliminate it, the act of thinking it away, being finite, supplies us with the uneliminable element of dualistic relation and difference. Further, if it be true that to predicate anything whatever of the infinite is to assign a limit to it, if the maxim *omnis determinatio est negatio* be sound, then the infinite has to the human mind no definite existence whatsoever. It is not distinguishable from the non-existent; and the conclusion, 'being = nothing,' is reached. Hegel himself admits that 'abstract supersensible essence, void of all difference and all specific character,

is a mere *caput mortuum* of the abstract understanding.* But on what principle are we debarred from claiming for the Infinite Essence, simply because of its infinity, all possible, all conceivable predicates, and therefore the power of revealing itself to the finite knower. To affirm the opposite is not to limit us alone, but to limit it, by denying its power of self-manifestation.

In all thought and consciousness dualism emerges, because there is invariably a subject and an object, a knower and a thing known. But do these limit each other? How so? We always know in part; but the object we discern may be recognized by us as infinite, in the very act of knowing it in part. We may be aware that the thing we apprehend in its inmost nature transcends our apprehension of it; while the latter fact does not abolish the former, or reduce our supposed knowledge to ignorance. While, therefore, all our knowledge enters the mind under dualistic conditions, this psychological fact does not relegate every object known by us to the category of the finite, or prevent the direct knowledge of God in his infinity and transcendency. Nor does it follow that, with a double element in all cognition, the one is positive and the other negative, as some of the advocates of nescience contend. They are both equally positive and equally negative, since each is antithetic of the other, and, nevertheless, its supporting background in the field of consciousness. One of the two may be prominent and proximate at a particular moment, but the other is invariably present behind it, giving it form and character. The relativity of

* 'Logic,' § 112.

human apprehension does not cut us off from a direct and positive knowledge of the Infinite. As admirably expressed by Dr Martineau, 'we admit the relative character of human thought as a psychological fact: we deny it as an ontological disqualification.'*

The most direct suggestions of Personality in alliance with infinity reach us, however, through the channel of the moral faculty. They are disclosed in the phenomena of conscience, and also of affection.

Before indicating how these suggestions arise, I return to the teaching of Mr Arnold on the subject. He has made us all so much his debtors by the light he has cast on sundry historical problems, and his rare literary skill in handling these, that any critic of his work, who differs from him on so radical a point as the nature of God, finds the task neither easy nor congenial. In addition to the obscurity which the subject itself presents, there is a special difficulty in adequately estimating a writer, whose criticism is on most points so true, so subtle, and profound.

Admiration, however, is one thing, assent is another. Mr Arnold wishes us all to use the Bible fruitfully, and his contributions to its fruitful use have been neither few nor slight. Nevertheless, in his attack on what he terms the 'God of metaphysics,' his elaborate critical assault—lacking neither in 'vigour nor in rigour'—on the notion of Personality in God, he removes, as it seems to me, the very basis of theology; and the whole superstructure of the science becomes fantastic and unreal. He is sanguine of laying the basis of a 'religion more serious, potent, awe-inspiring, and profound than any which the world

* *Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, p. 234.

has yet seen' (p. 109*), but he builds it on the ruins of the theistic philosophies of the past. The latter must in the first instance be levelled with the ground, and the *débris* removed. We are to find 'the elements of a religion—new, indeed, but in the highest degree hopeful, solemn, and profound' (p. 109)—only when we renounce the delusion that 'God is a person who thinks and loves,' regarding it as a 'fairy tale,' as 'figure and personification,' and of the same scientific value as the personification of the sun or the wind.

Religion, however, being the expression of dependence, involves and carries in its heart the recognition of an Object on whom the worshipper depends; and, as he is personal, and his personality is most distinctly evinced in his religion, the Object on whom he depends, and whom he recognises, must be personal also. Without personality—or its archetype and analogue—in God, religion is reduced to a poetic thrill or glow of emotion. From it, recognition is absent. It is both blind and dumb, inarticulate and vague. But, as was happily said of the system of Comte, 'the wine of the real presence being poured out,' we are asked 'to adore the empty cup.'

The readers of this *Review* do not need to be told that theoretical science or Speculative Philosophy—in the grand historic use and wont of the term—is to Mr Arnold a barren region, void of human interest; and that intellectual travel over it is pronounced by him to be resultless. His dismissal of the metaphysical arguments for Divine personality 'with sheer satisfaction'

* This article was written in 1874, when Mr Arnold's *Essays* appeared in *The Contemporary Review*. I quote from them as now collected in the volume entitled 'God and the Bible.'

'because they have convinced no one, have given rest to no one, have given joy to no one, nay, no one has even really understood them' (pp. 104-5), is curious as coming from so distinguished an advocate of rich and many-sided culture. Curious,—when one remembers that, from the schools of Speculative Philosophy, all the great movements of opinion in other departments have originally sprung, and that every question raised in these departments must ultimately run up into the region of metaphysic. On a first perusal of these delightful papers, one feels that he is being led by the most charming of guides into the regions of light and of certitude. By-and-by he finds that his guide is an army leader, who intends 'boldly to carry the war into the enemy's country, and see how many strong fortresses of the metaphysicians he can enter and rifle' (p. 96). He becomes the leader of a new crusade against our English notions about God, our crass metaphysics, and our unverifiable theology, and would prepare the way for a 'religion more serious, potent, awe-inspiring, and profound than any which the world has yet seen' by first cleverly chaffing the old philosophy out of the way.

But this disparagement of the whole region of metaphysic, because it deals with the questions of 'being' and 'essence,' is not so surprising as is Mr Arnold's attempt to find, in the simple etymology of words, a clue to the mysteries which baffle the ontologist. In this investigation, interesting as it is, he has started on a journey, which ends in a *cul de sac*. To discover the origin of the terms Being, Essence, Substance, by getting hold of the primitive Aryan root whence the Greek, Latin, French, or English words have been de-

rived, will not help us in the inquiry which concerns the origin of the ideas expressed by these terms. *Abstracta ex concretis* may be the law of linguistic derivation ; and, by etymological study, we may learn how the human race has come to make use of certain terms, and to attach particular meanings to them. In following the course of that curious river of linguistic affinity, we may trace the process by which the notions of movement, growth, and permanence have (possibly) grown out of the 'breathe,' 'grow,' and 'stand' of the old Aryan root. But the most exact knowledge of the subtlest windings of this river will not solve, will not even give us the materials for solving, the ulterior question, whether the human mind has imaginatively transformed the concrete into the abstract, or has been all the while interpreting to itself an objective reality. 'By a simple figure,' says Mr Arnold, 'these terms declare a perceived energy and operation, nothing more. Of a subject, that performs this operation, they tell us nothing' (p. 82). These 'primitives' have been 'falsely supposed to bring us news about the primal nature of things, to declare a subject in which inhered the energy and operation we had noticed, to indicate a fontal category, or supreme constitutive condition, into which the nature of all things whatsoever might be finally run up' (p. 82). No one, so far as I am aware, maintains this, as Mr Arnold puts it. Let it be conceded that our abstract terms arose out of concretes ; that, as acts of perception must have preceded the processes of generalisation in the race, (as they precede them in the experience of each individual), the words employed to express abstract ideas were first used to describe individual or concrete things ; and

that, the etymological research, which unravels for us the intricate processes of growth, adaptation and change in the *usus loquendi* of terms, is one of the most fruitful branches of inquiry. But, supposing the entire course of linguistic development traced for us by an unerring hand, and in precise scientific detail, the whole question re-emerges subsequent to such research, and confronts us as before—viz. this, what has the human mind really done in making use of these concrete terms to express its abstract notions? To express them at all, it must use *some* word; and that it selects one, which originally described an individual or concrete thing, tells nothing against the fact that it is now able to abstract from these particulars—to generalise and fitly to record its generalisation—or to describe, by means of the adopted term, ideas which have not entered the mind by the gateway of the senses.

Mr Arnold speaks of the words 'is' and 'be' as 'mysterious petrifications which remain in language as if they were autochthons there, as if no one could go beyond them or behind them. Without father, without mother, without descent, as it seemed, they yet are omnipresent in our speech, and indispensable' (p. 83); whereas he has shown that the terms really arose out of our sense-experience of concrete things. Let us suppose that he is correct in his account of the process by which the product has been reached. He merely exhibits to us a genealogical chart, or tree of derivation. A out of B, B out of C, C out of X. But the real question lies behind the genealogy. We may imagine our Aryan forefathers, in their infantine gaze over the ever-changing world of phenomena, describing what

met the eye and ear and senses generally, by certain words, mostly imitative of the sounds of nature. Then, as their intelligence grew, with the repetition of the old and the occurrence of new experience, if they wished to express the notion of a thing existing, they made use of a term which they had previously used to describe its operation, viz., 'breathing.' Were this statement of the origin and pre-historic usage of abstract terms found correct—a point which must be determined by specialists in the domain of archaic etymology—the investigation would not have really guided us one step towards the solution of the graver problem, the origin of the ideas with which the terms deal. We would have been merely moving on the surface-plane of phenomenal succession, of historic sequence and development; and the most accurate account of that process would no more explain the source of the ideas to which the mind has affixed the old terms, than the discovery of all the links of a chain would explain its origin or method of construction.

Mr Arnold would persuade us that, because the terms which now describe our abstract categories were originally used to describe objects known by sense-perception, the ideas came in also by that outward gateway. Is it not a better explanation of these 'mysterious petrifications,' *is* and *be*, that the notions which they represent, the categories which they describe, are themselves autochthons *in the human mind*; and that they spring up out of the soil of the consciousness, whenever that soil is made ready for their growth, by the scantiest intellectual husbandry? Indigenous to the spirit of man—though latent in its inmost substance till evolved by the struggle of mind

with its environment—it is not surprising that in afterwards naming them, the simple words, once used to describe the operations of nature, or of man, should be invested with new meanings; or that in the course of ages they should have broadened out into general and abstract terms.

But if neither the etymology of particular words, nor a study of the origin and growth of language, affords us any help in determining the origin of our ideas, it is equally certain that no knowledge of 'pre-historic man' can aid us in solving that ulterior question. Suppose it proved that man has arisen, in the long struggle for existence, out of elements inferior to himself, and that his present beliefs have been evolved out of lower phases of thought and feeling, this proof will not determine—it will not even touch—the problem of the reality of that existence, to which the present beliefs of the race bear witness. The question of chief interest is not the genealogical one, of how we have come to be endowed with these beliefs, but the metaphysical one of their present validity, to the individual and to the species. Are they, as they now exist, competent witnesses to an outstanding fact and an abiding reality? It matters little how a belief has been reached, if its final verdict be true; and the method of its development casts no light on the intrinsic character, or the trustworthiness of its final attestation. The evolution of organic existence out of the inorganic, and of the rational out of the organic—supposing it scientifically demonstrated, and every missing link in the chain of derivation supplied—would only tell us of a law, or method, or process of becoming. It would give us no informa-

tion as to the character of the Fountain-head, out of which the stream of development has flowed, and is flowing now. What has been evolved, in the slow uprise and growth of innumerable ages, is the outcome and manifestation of an

eternal process moving on

in lines of continuous succession—an ever-advancing stream of physical, intellectual, and moral tendency. But the question remains, is this onward movement a real advance? Is it progressive, as well as successive? Are the later conceptions of the universe—which have been evolved out of the guesses of primeval men—really ‘higher,’ because more accurate, interpretations of the reality of things? Or, is the whole series of notions from first to last an illusory process of idealization and personification, and therefore mere conjecture or guess-work? Grant that out of nature-worship all our theology has grown; has the growth been a progressive, and progressively accurate, interpretation of what is? If, out of the animal sensations of our childhood, the conception of a spiritual Presence has emerged, and out of the fantastic notions of primitive religion the subtlest analyses of our Western theology have sprung, the question of absorbing interest lies behind this concession, and is altogether unaffected by it. That question is, are our present adult notions like a mirage in the desert, like

the clouds that gather round the setting sun,

half the glory of which lies in the changefulness of their form and hue? or has the race had an intuition of reality—varying in accuracy, yet valid and

authentic—at each stage of its progress? If the latter alternative be rejected, wherein does the advance consist? Surely there is no intelligible advance at all? And the guesses of the child, at the foot of the ladder of inquiry, have an equal scientific value with the surmises of the most educated at the top, that is to say, neither have any scientific value at all.

If there be any meaning in a rudimentary stage of human history, when the notions formed of the universe were chaotic and outlined or distorted, and if this gave place by gradual steps to a time when 'the ideas of conduct or moral order and right had gathered strength enough to establish and declare themselves' (p. 135), what meaning are we to attach to the progress, unless in the latter period there was *a more accurate reading of the objective reality of things?* The 'native, continuous, and increasing pressure upon Israel's spirit of the ideas of conduct, and its sanctions' Mr Arnold calls 'his intuition of the eternal that makes for righteousness.' But whence came this pressure, this appeal from without, this solicitation and revelation? All that we are told is that 'Israel had an intuitive faculty, a natural bent for these ideas' (p. 139). But the scientific investigator of the laws of historic continuity at once raises the farther question of whence? and how? whence came they? and how did they originate? If these things pressed upon the national mind or consciousness of Israel, it must either have been from behind—*i.e.*, from tradition, the unconscious heritage of past experience working in the blood of the people—or, from an eternally present Power, disclosing itself to that particular race in a progressive series of

manifestations. But does the inferior state ever create the superior? It necessarily precedes it in time. But is the lower directly causal of the higher? We are told that the 'usage of the minority gradually became the usage of the majority' (p. 147). So far, we are simply recording facts which have occurred. We are dealing with history, with the successions of phenomena; but we are explaining nothing. Now, Philosophy essays an explanation of history. It is not satisfied with statistics. If we ask how the selfish and wholly animal tendencies of primitive society gradually gave place to others, that were generous or elevated, and if we are merely directed to habit, custom, or usage, it is evident that our director is simply veiling our ignorance from us, by a repetition of the question we proposed. It is *an explanation* of the usage, not a restatement of it, that we desire. Habit merely tells us that a thing done once was repeated, and will be done again. What we want to know *is*, how it came to be repeated? *why* it was done again? why it was done *at all*? How the bent of the race was determined this way rather than that—in favour of righteousness rather than its opposite—is therefore altogether unexplained by custom and association. It is the custom, association and usage, that call for explanation. But the progressive recognition of an eternally righteous Source or moral Centre of the universe may explain it; the discernment by the spirit of man of a supreme ethical principle, arising out of his relation to a transcendent moral Personality. On any other theory, the uprise from rudimentary perceptions to the state which we now agree to call the 'moral

order'—with the sanctions of society superadded to the customs of our ancestors—is unaccountable.

In other words, we cannot validly affirm that the process of historic evolution has, after long conflict and struggle, brought to the front principles of conduct and action, which can be called the real elements of moral order, or of the constitution of society, if these have not proceeded from, and are the gradually clearer manifestations of, an eternal moral Nature. If they are the product of a blind strife amongst rival competing tendencies, at what point do they become a rule for posterity? At what stage of evolution are we warranted in saying that 'the perception, and the rule founded on it, have become a conquest for ever, placing human nature on a higher stage; so that, however much the perception and the rule may have been dubious and unfounded once, they must be taken to be certain and formed now?' (p. 153). At no stage could this be affirmed, because what has been formed by strife must alter with the continued action of the forces that have made it what it is. The child of contingency remains contingent, and may itself become the parent of endless future change. Unless, therefore, the law of evolution ceases to operate, and the process of development abruptly closes, the possible alteration of the canons of morality, after the conquest has been made, is not only as conceivable as it was before the struggle commenced, but as certain. Farther, the possible reversal of these canons—their possible disappearance before some future conqueror,—is involved in their very origin, if that origin be merely the 'survival of the fittest' in the long struggle for existence.

To put it otherwise, and in detail: suppose that the family bond arose out of the selfish struggles of primitive man, that reverence for parents and love for children have been slowly evolved out of tendencies that were originally self-regarding, why should we call the later stage a more perfect one, for the race at large? It may be more perfect, for those who have attained to it; but it would have been out of place, if earlier in the field. Is it not an essential part of the process of development that every successive stage is *equally necessary and equally perfect* with all its antecedent and all its subsequent stages? Unless a point is reached when conduct becomes intrinsically excellent—excellent in virtue of its conformity to a rule which is not the product of evolution, and which cannot be superseded by anything to be evolved millenniums hence—how can we speak of monogamy and self-restraint as ‘the true law of our being’ in contrast with the earlier promiscuousness which it succeeded? Evolution, in short, tells us nothing of a moral goal, because it gives us no information of a moral Source. It supplies us with no standard, because it points to no Centre; and it brings with it no ethical sanction higher than custom, at any stage. *It has come about* is all that it tells us of any phenomenon.

Now, not to speak of the fluctuating moral verdicts of the world, and the obstinate reversions from later to earlier standards—that which has stood at the front and dominated for a while, falling again to the rear and being disregarded—how can we speak of one stage of human progress as dim and rudimentary, and of another as disciplined and mature, if there be no

absolute standard or moral goal towards which the efforts of the race are tending, and should tend? It is not merely that the ethical habit of to-day may not be a 'conquest for ever,' but only a chance victory in the skirmish of circumstance, which the next great conflict may reverse. It is much more than this. If the later state be the creation of the former, and evolved out of it—all the stages being of equal moral value as cause and consequence—the very notion of an ethical struggle disappears. The successive moments of moral experience are reduced to the category of states, merely prior and posterior, in the stream of development. And conscious effort to reach a higher standard, or to realise a nobler life, becomes unnatural discontent. It might even be construed as rebellion against the leadings of instinct; the actual legitimately crushing out the ideal. And with the stimulus of aspiration gone, and the sense of control removed, the drift of the average man and of the race would be towards the easiest pleasures, and the satisfactions of the savage state.

The emergence of the conscience is one thing, its *creation* is another. Its rise out of lower elements, its consequent flexibility, and its possible transformation in the course of ages into a much more delicate instrument—sensitive to all passing lights and shades and fine issues of conduct—is perfectly consistent with its being a competent witness to a Reality, which it has gradually succeeded in apprehending, and which it has not merely idealized out of its own subjective processes. If the sentiment of duty arose slowly out of an experience at first as entirely devoid of it as that of the

Baby new to earth and sky,
who

Never thinks that this is I,

the obscure genesis of the convictions which finally assume shapes so transcendent could not invalidate or even affect their trustworthiness. In short, the story of the race is but the story of the individual writ large. When the moral sense first awakens in a child, under the tutelage of its parents or seniors, the influences to which it is subjected do not create its conscience: they merely evoke it. The child simply opens his eyes and sees; although the process of learning to see accurately may be a much longer one, in moral than in visual perception. If it is so with the child, why may it not be so similarly with the race? Why not *necessarily*? Let the processes of growth, therefore, be what they may, the source of the moral faculty lies hid beyond the lines of historical investigation, and the authority of the developed product is not invalidated by the discovery of its lineage.

What evidence, then, have we that in the phenomena of conscience we come upon the traces of a principle

Deep-seated in our mystic frame

which is not evolved out of the lower elements of appetency and desire? Do these phenomena disclose results, which are most easily explained by the presence of an *alter ego*, 'in us, yet not of us'? Can we trace it working within us, yet mysteriously overshadowing us, and suggesting—in the occasional flashes of light sent across the darker background of experience—the action of another Personality, behind our own?

Our account of the phenomena of conscience is not exhausted when we affirm that certain moral causes, set in operation by ourselves or others, must issue in certain subjective effects upon the character. To say that definite consequences result from specific acts is only to state one half of the case, and that the least important half. How are our actions invested with the character of blameworthiness, or the reverse? Moral worth and moral baseness are not only two points or stages, in the upward or downward stream of human tendency. The merit and the demerit are respectively due to the character of the stream, as determined at the moment, by the act and choice of the individual.

It would be out of place at this point to raise the large question of the freedom of the will, its moral autonomy. Let it suffice to affirm that the theoretical denial of freedom will always be met by a counter affirmation, springing from a region unaffected by inductive evidence. It will also be always met by the recoil of the feelings of mankind from the doctrine of non-responsibility for action, the logical outcome of that denial. It may be safely affirmed that, allowing for hereditary tendency, and the influence of constraining circumstances, the race will continue to apportion its praise and its blame to individuals, on the ground that human action might take shape in either of two contrary directions, according to the choice and determination of the will. No action ever arises absolutely *de novo*, unaffected by antecedent causes, both active and latent; neither is any action absolutely determined from without, or from behind. In each act of choice, the causal nexus remains unsevered; while the

act itself is ethically free, and undetermined. In other words, affirming the moral autonomy of the will, we deny the liberty of libertarian indifference; and affirming the integrity of the causal nexus, we reject the despotism of necessitarian fate: and we maintain that, in so doing, we are not affirming and denying the same thing at the same time; but that we are true to the facts of consciousness, and preserve a moral eclecticism, which shuns the falsehood of extremes, and has its evidence in the personality of the agent. The two rival schemes of Liberty and Necessity, both 'resistless in assault, but impotent in defence,' are practically overthrown, by the ease with which each annihilates the other. To exhibit the *rationale* of this would require a long chapter.

Leaving it, therefore—and assuming the freedom we make no attempt to demonstrate—the specialty of the Power which legislates over the region of mixed motive and variable choice, is at once its absoluteness and its independence of the individual. It announces itself, in Kantian phrase, as the 'categorical imperative.' It is ours, not as an emotion or passion is ours. We speak in a figure of the *voice* of the conscience; implying, in our popular use of the term, its independence of us. It is not our own voice; or, if the voice of the higher self, in contrast with the lower, which it controls, it is an inspiration in us, the whispered suggestion of a monitor "throned within our other powers." If it were merely the remonstrance of one part of our nature against the workings of another part, we might question its right to do more than claim to be an equal inmate of the house. In any case disregard of it would amount to nothing more

serious than a loss of harmony, a false note marring the music of human action, or a flaw in argument that disarranged the sequence of thought. In the moral imperative, however, which commands us categorically, and acts without our order, and cannot be silenced by us, which is in us yet not of us, we find the hints of a Personality that is girding and enfolding ours. As admirably expressed by Professor Newman—

‘This energy of life within is ours, yet it is not we.
It is in us, it belongs to us, yet we cannot control it.
It acts without our bidding, and when we do not think of it.
Nor will it cease its acting at our command, or otherwise
obey us.
But while it recalls from evil, and reproaches us for evil,
And is not silenced by our effort, surely it is not *we*;
Yet it pervades mankind, as one life pervades the trees.’*

It is not that we are conscious of the restraints of law, of a fence or boundary laid down by statute. But, in the most delicate suggestions and surmises of this monitor, we are aware of a Presence ‘besetting us’—as the Hebrews put it—‘before and behind,’ penetrating the soul, pressing its appeals upon us, yet withdrawing itself the moment it has uttered its voice, and leaving us to the exercise of our own freedom. The most significant fact, if not the most noticeable, in the relation of the conscience to the will, is its quick suggestion of what ought to be done, and the entire absence of subsequent compulsion in the doing of it. When the force of the moral imperative is felt most absolutely, the hand of external necessity is with-

* Theism, p. 13. Cf. Fénelon, *De l’Existence de Dieu*, Part I. c. 1, § 29. See also Cardinal Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, Part I. c. 5, § 1.

drawn, that we may act freely. Consciously hemmed in and weighed down by physical forces, which we are powerless to resist, the pressure of this girding necessity is relaxed, within the moral sphere; and we are free to go to the right hand or the left, when duty appeals to us on the one side, and desire on the other. This has been so excellently put by Mr Richard Hutton, in his essay on 'The Atheistic Explanation of Religion,' that I may quote a sentence, which sums up the ethical argument for the Divine Personality, better than any other that I am aware of:—

'Accustomed as man is to feel his personal feebleness, his entire subordination to the physical forces of the universe, . . . in the case of moral duty he finds this almost constant pressure remarkably withdrawn at the very crisis in which the import of his actions is brought home to him with the most vivid conviction. Of what nature can a power be that moves us hither and thither through the ordinary course of our lives, but withdraws its hands at those critical points where we have the clearest sense of authority, in order to let us act for ourselves? The absolute control that sways so much of our life is waived just where we are impressed with the most profound conviction that there is but one path in which we can move with a free heart. If so, are we not then surely *watched*? Is it not clear that the Power which has therein ceased to *move* us has retired only to *observe*? . . . The mind is pursued into its freest movements by this belief, that the Power within could only voluntarily have receded from its task of moulding us, in order to keep watch over us, as we mould ourselves.'*

Thus the distinction or dualism, which is involved in all our knowledge, comes out into sharpest prominence in its moral section. We rise at once, above the uniformity of mere phenomenalism, and out of the

* *Essays, Theological and Literary*, vol. i., pp. 41, 42.

thralldom of necessity, by our recognition of a transcendent element latent in the conscience. We escape from the circle of self altogether, in the 'otherness' of moral law.

It is in the ethical field that we meet with the most significant facts, which prevent us from gliding, through a seductive love of unity, into a solution of the problem of existence that is pantheistic or unitarian. The fascination of the pursuit of unity, through all the diversities of finite existence, has given rise to many philosophical systems that have twisted the facts of consciousness to one side. But unity, by itself, is as unintelligible, as diversity, minus unity, is unthinkable. If there were but one self-existing Substance, of which all individual and particular forms of being were mere tributary rills, the relation of any single rill to its source, and to the whole, would be merely that of derivation. Moral ties would thus be lost, in a union that was purely physical. On this theory, the universe would be one, only because there was nothing in it to unite; whereas all moral unity implies diversity, and is based upon it. There must be a difference in the things which are connected by an underlying and under-working affinity. And we find this difference most apparent in the phenomena of the moral consciousness. While therefore the moral law legislates, and desire opposes, in the struggle that ensues between inclination and duty, we trace the working of a principle, which has not grown out of our desires and their gratification. We discover that we are not, like the links in the chain of physical nature, passive instruments for the development of the increasing purpose of things; but that we exist for the unfolding, disci-

plining, and completing of a life of self-control, and the inward mastery of impulse, through which, at the crises of decision, a new world of experience is entered.

We cannot tell when this began. Its origin is lost in the golden haze, that is wrapped around our infancy, when moral life is not consciously distinguishable from automatic action. But, as the scope of our faculties enlarges, a point is reached when the individual perceives the significance of freedom, the meaning of the august rules of righteousness, and the grave issues of voluntary choice. It is then that conscience,

Gives out at times

A little flash, a mystic hint

of a Personality distinct from ours, yet kindred to it, in the unity of which it lives and has its being. Whence come those suggestions of the Infinite, that flit athwart the stage of consciousness, in all our struggle and aspiration after the ideal—if not from a Personal Source kindred to themselves? We do not create our own longings in this direction. On the contrary, as we advance from infancy to maturity, we awaken, by progressive steps, to the knowledge of a vast overshadowing Personality, unseen and supersensible, recognized at intervals then lost to view—known and unknown—surrounding, enfolding, inspiring, and appealing to us, in the suggestions of the moral faculty? In addition, our sense of the boundlessness of duty brings with it a suggestion of the infinity of its Source. We know it to be beyond ourselves, and higher than we, extra-human, even extra-mundane; while, on other grounds, we know it to be also intra-

human and intra-mundane. We find no difficulty in realizing that the Personality, revealed to us in conscience, may have infinite relations and affinities; because, in no district of the universe, can we conceive the verdict of the moral law reversed. Nowhere would it be right not 'to do justly, and to love mercy,' although the practical rules and minor canons of morality may, like all ceremonial codes, change with the place in which they originate, and the circumstances which give rise to them. If, therefore, the suffrage of the race has not created this inward monitor, and if its sway is coextensive with the sphere of moral agency, if its range is as vast as its authority is absolute, in these facts we have corroborative evidence of the union of the Personal with the Infinite.

THE DOCTRINE OF METEMPSYCHOSIS.

READ TO 'THE NEW SPECULATIVE SOCIETY,' SCOTLAND, NOVEMBER 1877.

(*The Fortnightly Review*, September 1878).

It seems surprising that in the discussions of contemporary philosophy on the origin and destiny of the soul, there has been no explicit revival of the doctrines of Pre-existence and Metempsychosis. Whatever may be their intrinsic worth, or evidential value, their title to rank on the roll of philosophical hypotheses is undoubted. They offer quite as remarkable a solution of the mystery which all admit as the rival theories of Creation, Traduction, and Extinction.

What I propose in this paper is not to defend the doctrines, but to restate them ; to distinguish between their several forms ; to indicate the speculative grounds on which the most plausible of them may be maintained ; to show how it fits as well into a theistic as into a pantheistic theory of the universe ; and to point out the difficulties in the ethical problem which it lightens if it does not remove.

I may best approach the question by a statement of the chief difficulty which seems to block the way of a belief in Immortality, arising out of the almost universal acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution as explanatory of physical existence, and one of the considerations by which it has been met. This will lead, by natural sequence, to the theories in question.

The difficulty is this. Admitting the development of man out of prior conditions, and retaining a belief in his immortality, a point must have been reached when a mortal predecessor gave rise to an immortal successor. If all that now is has issued inexorably out of what once was, and the human race been gradually evolved out of a prior type, we have but three alternatives to choose from : either first, the whole series is mortal ; or second, the whole is immortal ; or third, a long series of mortal ancestors gave place, at a leap and a bound, to an immortal descendant, the father of a race of immortals. There is no other possible alternative, if we admit a process of development. The first of the three may be set aside meanwhile, since it is the doctrine of the natural mortality or extinction of the individual. The second presents the insuperable difficulty of the continued existence in a separate form of all the living creatures that have ever appeared on the stage of being ; because it is impossible to draw a line anywhere amongst them, and say that the dog is immortal but the reptile is not ; or that the reptile is, while the bee and the ant are not ; or that they are, while the myriad tribes of the protozoa are not. We are, therefore, limited to the third hypothesis, viz., that a point was reached when immortality was evolved ; that is to say, that the power of surviving the shock of dissolution was non-existent for ages, but that it became real in a moment of time, when the mortal creature that preceded man gave birth to one who was an ' heir of immortality.' In stating the problem thus, I merely indicate the logical result of admitting the principle of Evolution as explanatory of physical existence, and conjoining with it the doctrine of Immortality. The

derivation of the human body from a lower type is quite consistent with the latter doctrine, because the body is not immortal. It is, besides, a much worthier notion, and more in keeping with analogy, to suppose that the body was formed by natural process out of a previous animal organization, than to imagine it to have been instantaneously created out of the inorganic dust of the world. But was the human soul similarly evolved out of the vital principle of the previous races? Was the *ζωή* of the animal the parent of the *ψυχή*, or *πνεῦμα*, in man? This is the development theory in its completed form. If it be demonstrable, it is certain that man cannot be immortal. His race may be permanent (although, by the hypothesis, it is perpetually altering), but the individuals composing it cannot live for ever. It is impossible, in short, that Immortality can be a prerogative evolved out of mortality, because the one is separated from the other, to use an expressive phrase of Norris's, 'by the whole diameter of being.' This is the difficulty in question.

It has been met, or attempted to be met, by the following consideration. It is alleged that the case was precisely the same in reference to the first immortal evolved out of a mortal ancestor, as it is in reference to any of his descendants; because, in both cases, the beginnings of life are similar. These may be physiologically traced; and a point is always reached when a possible mortality is averted. The 'first beginnings of individual life,' says Mr Picton, 'do not involve immortality: and when such an incipient merely germinant life deceases, it perishes utterly.' There must be a period reached, therefore, at which immortality begins. 'If an individual died one moment before a certain

time he would be annihilated : whereas, if he survives a moment longer, he will live for ever' (New Theories and the Old Faith, p. 199). And so it is thought that a time comes when the personality of the individual matures, when 'his isolation grows defined,' and he is thenceforward able to 'survive the shock of death ;' whereas, had his bodily organization perished one moment earlier, his destiny would have been simply to remerge in the general whole. Thus, the immaterial principle which in a thousand cases dies, and passes into some other form of immaterial energy, survives in the case of others, and wins permanence for itself by successfully resisting the first perils of independent life. Such is the rejoinder.

I cannot think this way of escaping the difficulty a satisfactory one, unless the principle which survives is believed to have existed previously in some other form. The difference between immortality and mortality is not one of degree. It is literally infinite, and the one can never give rise to the other. The immortal cannot, in the nature of things, be developed out of the mortal. A creature endowed with feeble powers of life may originate another endowed with stronger powers, which will therefore live longer, and be able to survive the storms which have shipwrecked its feebler ancestors ; but this is a totally different thing from the evolution of an immortal progeny out of a series of mortal predecessors. Let us suppose, however, that the immortal has descended, that it has 'lapsed from higher place,' or that it has ascended, risen from some lower sphere, immortality may then belong to its very *essence*. It may, in its inmost nature, be incapable of death, its destiny being a

perpetual transmigration, or renewal of existence. The distinction between a theory of evolution (which admits immortality) and that of transmigration is immense. According to the former, man at a definite moment of time emerged out of the animal, and the power of surviving the shock of death was conferred upon him, or won by him, in the struggle for existence. According to the latter, man was always immortal; before he entered the present life he existed in another state, and he will survive the destruction of his present body simply because his soul, which is intrinsically deathless, passes into a new body, or remains temporarily unembodied. The difference is immense. On the other hand, the distinction between the theory of transmigration and that of absorption is equally great. According to the one, the soul retains its individuality and preserves its identity through all the changes it undergoes; according to the other, its individuality is lost though its vital force survives, as an ineradicable constituent of the universe.

The doctrine of Metempsychosis is theoretically extremely simple. Its root is the indestructibility of the vital principle. Let a belief in pre-existence be joined to that of posthumous existence, and the dogma is complete. It is thus at one and the same time a theory of the soul's origin, and of its destination; and its unparalleled hold upon the human race may be explained in part by the fact of its combining both in a single doctrine. It appears as one of the very earliest beliefs of the human mind in tribes not emerged from barbarism. It remains the creed of millions at this day. It is probably the most widely-spread and permanently influential of all speculative theories as to the origin and destiny of the soul.

In a single paragraph I may sketch its history, though in the most condensed and cursory manner. It has lain at the heart of all Indian speculation on the subject, time out of mind. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Vedas, one of the roots of Buddhist belief. The ancient Egyptians held it. It is prominent in their great classic, the 'Book of the Dead.' In Persia, it coloured the whole stream of Zoroastrian thought. The Magi taught it. The Jews brought it with them from the captivity in Babylon. Many of the Essenes and Pharisees held it. Though foreign to the genius both of Judaism and Christianity, it has had its advocates (as Delitzsch puts it) 'as well in the synagogue as in the church.' The Cabbala teaches it emphatically. The Apocrypha sanctions it, and it is to be found scattered throughout the Talmud. In Greece, Pythagoras proclaimed it, receiving the hint probably both from Egypt and the East; Empedocles taught it; Plato worked it elaborately out, not as mythical doctrine embodying a moral truth, but as a philosophical theory or conviction. It passed over into the Neo-Platonic School at Alexandria. Philo held it. Plotinus and Porphyry in the third century, Jamblicus in the fourth, Hierocles and Proclus in the fifth all advocated it in various ways; and an important modification of the Platonic doctrine took place amongst the Alexandrians, when Porphyry limited the range of the metempsychosis, denying that the souls of men ever passed downwards to a lower than the human state. Many of the fathers of the Christian Church espoused it; notably Origen. It was one of the Gnostic doctrines. The Manichæans received it, with much else, from their Zoroastrian

predecessors. It was held by Nemesius, who emphatically declares that all the Greeks who believed in immortality believed also in metempsychosis. There are hints of it in Boethius. Though condemned, in its Origenistic form, by the Council of Constantinople in 551, it passed along the stream of Christian theology, and reappeared amongst the Scholastics in Erigena and Bonaventura. It was defended with much learning and acuteness by several of the Cambridge Platonists, especially by Henry More. Glanvill devotes a curious treatise to it, the *Lux orientalis*. English clergy and Irish bishops were found ready to espouse it. Poets, from Henry Vaughan to Wordsworth, praise it. It won the passing suffrage of Hume as more rational than the rival theories of Creation and Traduction. It has points of contact with the anthropology of Kant and Schelling. It found an earnest advocate in Lessing. Herder also maintained it, while it fascinated the minds of Fourier and Lerroux. Soame Jenyns, the Chevalier Ramsay, and Mr Edward Cox have written in its defence. If we may broadly classify philosophical systems as *a priori* or *a posteriori*, intuitional or experiential, Platonist or Aristotelian, this doctrine will be found to ally itself both speculatively and historically with the former school of thought. Passing from the schools, to the instinctive ideas of primitive men, or the conceptions now entertained by races that are half-civilised or wholly barbarous, a belief in transmigration will be found to be almost universal. It is inwoven with nearly all the mythology of the world. It appears in Mexico and in Tibet, amongst the Negroes and the Sandwich Islanders. It comes down from the Druids

of ancient Gaul to the Tasmanians of to-day. The stream of opinion—whether instinctive, mystic, or rational is continuous and broad; and if we could legitimately determine any question of belief by the number of its adherents, the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, would apply to this more fitly than to any other. Mr Tylor speaks of it (Primitive Culture, ch. xii.) as now ‘arrested and unprogressive,’ or lingering only as ‘an intellectual crotchet.’ It may be so: but I think it quite as likely to be revived, and to come to the front again, as any rival theory on the subject, when the decay that is the fate of every system of opinion overtakes those that are in the place of honour and recognition now. Each philosophical doctrine, being in the nature of things only a partial interpretation of the universe, or an approximate solution of the mystery of existence, is in its turn set aside as inadequate; while all the greater ones invariably reappear under altered forms. The resuscitation of discarded theories is as inevitable as the modifications which they undergo in the process of revival. Metempsychosis is true of all *theories*, whether it applies to souls or not.

There are three possible forms of the doctrine. Logically four may be held, but only three are philosophically tenable. Either, first, it may be maintained that the metempsychosis is universal, extending to all finite forms of life, so that the highest may change place with the lowest, and *vice versa*. The life that was in man may degenerate, or pass downwards into the animal; or the life that was in the animal may rise, and pass upwards into man; the winding stream of development flowing either way, and the particular

direction which the current takes being determined by the internal state of the individual. There may be thus, on the one hand, degradation and descent; on the other, elevation and ascent, through a perpetual cycle of successive births and deaths. Or, second, the transmigration may be limited to the animal world, and denied to the human. It is a conceivable and may seem a plausible hypothesis, to those who shrink from extending the transmigration to man, that it applies solely to the lower orders of existence, that the life of an animal is lost or 'blown-out,' but that on the destruction of its organisation, the vital force reemerges, and is continued in some other form. (The supposition which is logically distinct from this, but which is not philosophically tenable, is the contrary one, that the transmigration holds good of man only, and does not extend to the animal world.) The third form of the theory is that the transmigration may apply both to the human and to the animal world; but that in each case it is strictly limited to one sphere, that is to say, that the souls of men animate successive bodies, but that they never descend to a lower level, while the vital spirit of the animal never ascends into the human form. This was practically the development which the Pythagorean and Platonic doctrine took under Porphyry and others in the Alexandrian school. Thus, metempsychosis may be either, first, a law or process regulating the universal development of life on our planet, or, second, a cyclical movement along one line, and confined to one group of existences; or, third, it may be a movement along two definite lines, but strictly limited to these lines.

I may now state some of the obvious facts which

gave rise to the belief among primitive races, and the less prominent ones of a higher order which suggested it to the more meditative spirits of antiquity. The inferences may have been illogically drawn; but the natural history of a doctrine is one thing, its philosophical validity is another; and the historical development of a belief does not always or usually follow the lines of scientific evidence. The student of the history of civilisation is familiar with this fact, that reasonings which are philosophically worthless have frequently led to conclusions which are at least highly probable; just as beliefs which are demonstratively true have often been sustained by arguments radically unsound.

The superficial resemblances between the lower animals and men in feature, disposition, and character, in voice and mien, would suggest to the primitive races the probability that the bodies of animals were inhabited by human souls, and those of men by animal natures. The intelligence and feeling of the brutes, their half-human character, and the brutality of some men, seemed an evidence that their respective souls or vital principles had exchanged places. They saw the cunning of the fox, the fierceness of the tiger, in their comrades; they also learned the fidelity of a friend from the rare attachment and devotion of their dogs. As they were in the habit of describing the qualities of men by these surface resemblances, as leonine, currish, vulpine, etc., and *vice versa*, of describing the characteristics of animals by terms originally applied to their own race, it was a natural, though not a logical inference that their respective vital principles were interchangeable. In short the rare humanity of some animals and the notorious animality of some men suggested to

the primitive races, not the common origin of both, but the arbitrary passage of one into the other.

In addition, family likenesses being transmitted, and reappearing after an interval of generations, would suggest the return of the spirits of the dead within a new physical organisation. Mere facial resemblances led the common mind to believe in the re-embodiment of souls. Still more significantly the appearance of mental features resembling those of any noted person in the past, suggested the actual return of the departed. If one resembled his ancestors somewhat closely in intellect, or valour, or temperament and style of action, it was supposed that the ancestor had again put on the vesture of the flesh, and 'revisited the glimpses of the moon.' The spirit of the master being seen in the pupil seemed a hint of the same thing: and the notion that one of the dead had returned to reanimate a body may very naturally have grown out of these obvious concrete facts. I need scarcely add that the deduction is wholly unwarrantable, and the argument illusory. An illogical inference founded on some surface analogy has frequently given rise to a belief which has grown strong in the total absence of valid evidence in its favour. In this case, for example, the spirit of the master appears in the pupil most conspicuously when both are living, or shortly after the death of the master, when his soul cannot have entered his pupil, unless he became the recipient of two souls. Further, there is no reason to believe that if metempsychosis took place, the new manifestations of mind and character would be similar to the old ones. They would much more likely be widely different. It would give us a poor notion of any spirit that reappeared

within the old limits, if it merely reproduced its past actions. Such a procedure would be as disappointing as those inane utterances of the dead with which modern Spiritualism pretends to be familiar. If the spirits of the departed make any progress in knowledge and experience, we would expect to find something very different from a repetition of their former mode of activity. The argument is quite illusory.

I pass therefore to a third, and a much higher consideration. It arises out of certain psychological facts which have seemed to warrant the inference of the soul's pre-existence. Quite suddenly a thought is darted into the mind, which cannot be traced back to any source in past experience; or we hear a sound, see an object, experience sensations, which seem to take us wholly out of the circle of sense-perception that has been possible to us in the present life. This is one of the arguments of the *Phædo*: and it is the central thought of Wordsworth's magnificent 'Ode on the intimations of Immortality from recollections of childhood.' The 'splendour in the grass,' and 'glory in the flower,' which Wordsworth saw and felt in childhood, he explains by their being the dim memory of a brighter experience that was passed; a recovered fragment of ante-natal life—

' Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come,' &c.

On the one hand, the halo with which memory surrounds our childhood, and on the other, the melancholy awakened by a sense of its being irrecoverably gone, have suggested the idea that we look back through

the golden gateway of childhood to the glory of a dawn preceding it.

‘The soul that rises with us, our life’s star
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.’

This is also one of the arguments adduced by Gautama, the reputed founder of the Nyaya system of Indian Philosophy. I quote from the aphorisms of the Nyaya, published for the Benares College, at Allahabad. ‘Joy, fear, and grief,’ he says, ‘arise to him that is born, through relation to his memory of things previously experienced.’ And this aphorism is thus commented upon by one of Gautama’s pupils, Viswanatha, ‘If joy arises before the causes of joy are experienced, the child must have existed in a previous life.’ And so, the subtle Indian metaphysic said, ‘If in one life, then in a series, and an illimitable series; and there being no beginning, it is indestructible, and can have no end. The same thing Gautama endeavoured to prove from the psychological phenomena of desire. ‘We see nothing born void of desire.’ Since every creature experiences desires which seek satisfaction before there is any experience of what can satisfy them, Gautama and his commentator trace this back to knowledge acquired in a previous life. Both arguments are inconclusive. The first set of phenomena referred to by Plato, and the Platonic poets so often, can be explained otherwise than by the hypothesis of pre-existence. In dreams, notions seemingly the most discordant unite, and our whole consciousness sometimes passes into a chaotic or amorphous state. As to the second set of phenomena appealed to by Gautama, if instinctive desire demands a previous life

to explain it, the same instinct in that life requires one still prior, and so on *ad infinitum*. And the action of instinctive desire can be easily explained as the growth of experience, or the result of a series of tentative efforts which seek, and continue to seek satisfaction, till they find it. On the other hand, while these suggestions of instinct and of reminiscence seem invalid as arguments in favour of pre-existence, the absence of memory of any actions done in a previous state cannot be a conclusive argument against our having lived through it. Forgetfulness of the past may be one of the conditions of entrance upon a new stage of existence. The body, which is the organ of sense perception, may be quite as much a hindrance as a help to reminiscence. As Plotinus said, 'matter is the true river of Lethe: immersed in it, the soul forgets everything.' In that case casual gleams of memory, giving us sudden, abrupt, and momentary revelations of the past, are precisely the phenomena we would expect to meet with. If the soul has pre-existed, what we would *a priori* anticipate are only some faint traces of recollection, surviving in the crypts of memory.

One of the main objections brought against the doctrine of pre-existence—an objection which seems insuperable to the popular mind—is the total absence of any authentic or verifiable memory of the past. It is supposed that if we cannot remember a past life, it is all the same as if it never was ours; for the thread of identity must be a conscious one. This, however, is just what its advocates deny. They appeal to the latent elements which underlie our present consciousness, out of which the clearest knowledge arises; and

they maintain that there is a hidden world of the unconscious in which the subterranean river of personality flows.

But the deeper and more philosophical grounds on which the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul has been and may be maintained are threefold. I would characterise them respectively as the speculative, the ethical, and the physical justifications of the dogma. If they explain its prevalence, and account for its vitality, they do so, by giving a show of reason for the theory, by exhibiting its intellectual *raison d'être*.

The first is a purely ontological consideration, the relevancy of which will be denied by the disciples of experience, but which seems, to say the least, to be more valid than their denial. No one has stated it with more force or persuasiveness than Plato. The great idealist of antiquity found an evidence of pre-existence in our present knowledge of *a priori* notions, or ideas which are not the product of experience, such as mathematical axioms and all metaphysical first principles. If they are latent in the soul at birth, their origin must be sought in a previous state of existence. We could not now transcend sense, and reach general notions of any kind, unless these notions had belonged to us in a previous state. But it is evident that if their origin in this life demands for its explanation the pre-supposition of a prior life, their existence in that state would involve the postulate of one still previous, and so on *ad infinitum*: that is to say, it would demand the eternal existence of the soul itself. And it is thus that we reach the fully developed form of this ontological argument. If life or existence belongs to the soul intrinsically, it must

have always existed. As in the Nyaya system, the soul is held to be eternal, because, if not eternal, it would be mortal. 'Whatever has had a beginning will have an end,' was a fundamental position of Gautama and his school: and this notion is so fixed in the Brahminical mind, that every religion which denies it, or fails to recognise it, is looked upon as *ipso facto* a false religion. The Brahminical mind is opposed to Christianity, because it conceives that Christianity is opposed to pre-existence. So the Bhagavad Gita says of the soul, 'You cannot say of it, it hath been, or is about to be, or is to be hereafter. It is a thing without birth.'

The whole argument of the Phædo revolves around the same centre, that the soul is naturally and intrinsically deathless, that it has in it a principle of life, with which you cannot associate, and of which you cannot predicate mortality. If so, its pre-existence is quite as certain as its posthumous existence. This is the dominant thought of all that Plato teaches on the subject of immortality, alike in the Phædo, the Phædrus, and the Republic. It is a purely ontological consideration. All the detailed argumentation in the Phædo for example, whether it involves ethical or dialectical elements,—the proof from the everlasting cycle of existence and origination out of opposites, the argument from reminiscence, the proof from the simplicity and consequent indissolubility of the soul, the refutation of the objections of Simmias and Cebes, the psychological plea founded on the native prerogatives and capacities of the soul—all either presuppose or are merely different ways of stating and illustrating the cardinal position that indestructible life belongs to the

soul's essence. To Plato, the ideal theory is primary, the immortality of the soul secondary; but the one involves the other. If the mind of man is competent to grasp eternal ideas, it must be itself eternal. If the ideas which it apprehends are eternal, it must participate in their eternity; and this imperishableness is in its very essence. In the *Phædrus* the argument is advanced that the soul is ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. It is the source of motion; but having the cause of motion within itself, out of this αὐτοκίνησις comes its immortality. In the tenth book of the *Republic* the question is raised, what can possibly destroy the soul? Evil attacks and corrupts it. It injures its character without wasting its substance: and if this, which most of all might be supposed capable of destroying it, cannot, then nothing else can assail it. What is composite may be decomposed; but the soul, though it has many faculties, is not composite. It is one, and cannot be decomposed, and must therefore live for ever. But, if so, it has lived always. It is without beginning—ἀει ὄν (*Rep.* X. 609—611): as in the *Phædo* it is described as ἀίδιον ὄν (106 D.). The number of souls in the universe does not increase. An addition to the number of immortals would be a contradiction in terms, inasmuch as what begins to be must die, and what does not die in time was never born in time. If, therefore, we cannot attach the idea of dissolution or non-existence to the soul, it must have had an eternal past: no temporal origin can be assigned to it. Its pre-existence and its posthumous existence are correlative ideas in Platonic thought. If it has also had a historical origin in time (which it has), it will have it over and over again: experiencing many births and

many deaths. It is born when it dies, and dies when it is born. In short, the terms 'birth' and 'death' denote merely relative conceptions, which disguise our ignorance as much as they disclose our knowledge. We only see the phenomenal appearances of birth and death, of origination and decess; but the amount of vital force or of spiritual existence as a fixed and constant quantity.

The second ground on which the theory of pre-existence finds a philosophical justification is an ethical one. It offers an explanation of the moral anomalies of the world, the unequal adjustments of character and situation, with the heterogeneousness and apparent favouritism of Providence. To many minds this has seemed the most plausible aspect under which metempsychosis may be regarded: and if it unravels the ethical puzzle of suffering associated with virtue, and happiness allied with evil, it may have great moral value, even while its scientific basis remains unproved. Hierocles said, 'Without the doctrine of metempsychosis, it is not possible to justify the ways of Providence.' Let us see. It is offered to us not as an explanation of the origin of evil in the abstract, but as a key to the unequal adjustment of happiness and misery in the present life, or the way in which they are respectively *distributed*. It is an oft-told tale in all the literature of the world, and a perplexing fact in every life, this union of virtue with sorrow or even with misery (which is the secret of all tragedy), and the opposite and equally incongruous union of happiness and vice. If these phenomena of the moral world, taken by themselves, are to yield us a theory of the universe, it can scarcely be a monotheistic one. It

must be dualistic or Manichean. They seem to indicate either the conspicuous partiality and favouritism of Heaven, or a successful assault on the government of a righteous Being by a formidable rival power, if not an equal potentate. At this point, the theories of pre-existence and metempsychosis offer to lighten the burden of the difficulty. They affirm, to quote the words of Jouffroy,—used by him in another connection,—that human life is ‘a drama whose prologue and catastrophe are both alike wanting.’ In a previous state, the same laws existed which govern our present life; and as the two states are connected by moral ties, we now gather the fruit of what we formerly sowed. It is not more true that in age we reap the fruit of the seed we sow in youth, than that we gather in this life the harvest of an innumerable series of past lives. The disasters which overtake the good are not the penalty for present action; they are punishment for the errors and faults of a bygone life. The sufferers are not expiating their forefathers’ crimes, but their own formerly committed. Felicity associated with moral degradation has the same relation to a past state of existence. The reward is given for former actions that were worthy of recompense; the external circumstances of each life having a moral relation to the internal state of the soul in its previous existence.

The theory arises out of a demand for equity in the adjustment of the external and the internal conditions of existence. On no moral theory can the present unequal adjustment be considered both equitable and final. If it is final—*i.e.* if there is no future rectification—it is not equitable. If it is not final, but only a temporary arrangement for the purposes of moral

discipline and education, it may be the most equitable of all possible arrangements. The moral root of the theory is thus the sense of justice, and the conviction not only that justice will be done, but that *it is now being done*. On the theory of a coming rectification, which connects the present with the future, and not with a past life, the idea is that justice is not now done; but that the assize and the sentence will put all to rights. The theory of metempsychosis, connecting the present with the past as well as with the future, affirms that there is no region of space, or moment of time, in which it is not done. It is scarcely to be wondered at that Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, calls this doctrine 'the golden key' to Providence; or that he enlarges in its praise, in that remarkable dream in his *Divine Dialogues*, in which he describes his vision of the key. 'Let us but assume,' he says, 'the pre-existence of souls, and all those difficulties which overcloud the understanding will vanish.' He supposes that human souls were created 'in infinite myriads,' 'in the morning of the world.' 'All intellectual spirits that ever were, are, or shall be, sprang up with the light and rejoiced together before God, in the morning of the creation.' I make this quotation from More—whose Dialogues on the subject are much more interesting than his laboured treatise on 'the immortality of the soul'—because, as he combined the doctrine of the creation of souls with their pre-existence, he represents one branch of the theory; the other branch being that represented by Gautama, Plato, and the neo-Platonists, who maintain the soul's eternity. Metempsychosis fits equally well into both theories. As a speculative doctrine, it is equally con-

sistent with a belief in instantaneous creation, and with a theory of emanation.

The ethical leverage of the doctrine is immense. Its motive power, as compared with the notion of posthumous influence after the individual has perished—the substitute for immortality offered by La Mettrie and his colleagues, and by all the positivists—is great. It reveals as magnificent a background to the present life, with its contradictions and disasters, as the prospect of immortality opens up an illimitable foreground, lengthening on the horizon of hope. It binds together the past, the present, and the future in one ethical series of causes and effects, the inner thread of which is both personal to the individual and impersonal, connecting him with two eternities, the one behind and the other before. With peculiar emphasis it proclaims the survival of moral individuality and personal identity, along with the final adjustment of external conditions to the internal state of the agent.


Several objections to the doctrine, however, from an ethical point of view, must be candidly weighed. To believe in a past state of existence, of which we have no present remembrance, will appear to some minds to weaken the sense of responsibility. It may be doubted whether we can have any moral relation to a past life of which we remember nothing, or to a future life in which the memory of the present will similarly vanish. To this it might be replied that the moral links which connect the successive moments of our present experience are often unconscious ones, and their validity as links does not depend on their being luminous ever afterwards. The supposed recency of our origin is not the ground of our responsibility, and we

are accountable for a thousand things we have forgotten.

For is not our first year forgot ?

The haunts of memory echo not

even as to terrestrial life. To other minds and temperaments, the notion of a vast ancestry, of an illimitable genealogy, will rather deepen the sense of responsibility than weaken it. As the inheritance of an illustrious name and pedigree quickens the sense of duty in every noble nature, a belief in pre-existence may enhance the glory of the present life and intensify the reverence with which the deathless principle is regarded. The want of any definite remembrance of past states of consciousness can be no barrier to a belief in our having experienced them ; and a very slight reflection will show that if we have pre-existed this life, memory of the details of the past is absolutely impossible. The power of the conservative faculty though relatively great, is extremely limited. We forget the larger portion of experience soon after we have passed through it ; and we should be able to recall the particulars of our past years, filling up all the missing links of consciousness since we entered on the present life, before we were in a position to remember our ante-natal experience. Birth into the world may be necessarily preceded by the crossing of the river of Lethe. The result would be the obliteration of knowledge acquired during a previous state ; while the capacity for fresh acquisition survived, and the garnered wealth of old experience would determine the amount and the character of the new. So long, therefore, as it is impossible to retain the memory of all past experiences, so long as fragments survive



which suggest pre-existence, so long as the river of our present consciousness flows in many subterranean places, so long as the connection of soul and body induces forgetfulness as much as it quickens remembrance, this difficulty may not be an insuperable barrier in the way of the theory of metempsychosis.

Another difficulty, however, remains. It may be said that pre-existence fails to explain the moral inequality which now exists, because, if we assume a previous life to account for the maladjustment of this, a prior pre-existence must explain the anomalies of that, and so on *ad infinitum*. Even if the moral disorder is temporary, its future elimination will not explain why it once existed under a perfect system of moral government. The theory of its previous existence only carries the difficulty one stage nearer to its source, but it does not remove it, or lighten its pressure in the region to which it is driven back. Besides, if the ultimate prospect is such a re-arrangement of destiny, by an adjustment of the external state to the internal condition, that no inequality remains, why is this not effected *now*? Why is the marriage of virtue and felicity (the internal and the external) so long postponed? To this it may be replied, that it is no part of the theory of metempsychosis to explain the origin of evil. It is only the moral inequality arising from the way in which happiness and misery are distributed in this life—often in inverse ratio to virtue and vice—that it seeks to explain. To throw any speculative or moral difficulty into the background and prevent its forward pressure, is to accomplish something, although the puzzle still remains; and to throw it back a little way is perhaps all that we can

do, unless we can eliminate it, which assuredly we cannot do. The demand to carry it still farther back, so as to explain the previous inequality, is really to raise the question why it is there at all. And to this there is probably no answer, except that which the existence of free will supplies. With free will permanently existing, there is a permanent possibility of departure from the moral centre, and a swerving towards the circumference. Hence the necessity for a readjustment of the internal and external conditions will begin afresh. Others may object that their sense of justice is not satisfied by our suffering in the present life for the errors of one that is past. But is there justice in our suffering in manhood for the faults of our youth? in our receiving anything to-day for the acts of yesterday? or in children suffering at all for the deeds of their parents? In the two former cases, it is merely a question of a certain time elapsing between the act and its consequence. The third is the case of one individual suffering for the errors of another, to whom he stands organically and otherwise related. But if each of us may suffer from his own past actions, and one may suffer through another's deeds, the law will continue to operate, although the deed may belong to one stage of being and the penalty to another, although the cause and its consequence be separated by the widest possible interval.

There is a third objection which must not be overlooked. An everlasting cycle of lives might become wearisome, and induce a longing for repose, unbroken by any new birth in time. The perpetual descent and ascent, with repetitions of experience only

slightly varied, might lead to the wish of the lotus-eaters—

While all things else have rest from weariness,
All things have rest, why should we toil alone ?

Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease our wanderings ;
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ?

This is virtually the longing for *nirvana*. And the relation of the doctrine of metempsychosis to that of nirvana is curious and interesting. Metempsychosis is part of the Buddhist belief, and yet nirvana, the goal of Buddhist longing, is the cessation of metempsychosis ; the soul attaining rest by ceasing to exist, or being “blown out.” Into all the forms of Buddhist opinion transmigration enters ; but “soul wandering” is a calamity, an evil inseparable from existence. Nirvana is a deliverance from metempsychosis. After undergoing the needful purification of many births and deaths, the soul attains the condition requisite for the perfect felicity of annihilation. In other words, it is the discipline of metempsychosis that gradually induces a feeling of detachment from sensible things. A repetition of experience is no longer necessary, and the soul is at length fitted and entitled to escape from the turmoil of existence, with its endless “vanity and vexation of spirit,” into the perfect rest of non-existence. Such is nirvana. It is worthy of note, however, that amongst the Cingalese Buddhists, the transmigration ending in nirvana, or the peace of nonentity, passed into a doctrine of extinction plus transmission. The departing soul, ready to be “blown out,” lit the lamp of existence

in another spirit before its own annihilation was consummated. Its last point of contact with existence, its expiring effort, was a creative one. It kept up the succession of creatures destined to undergo the same process of metempsychosis, by a final act of *upādāna*, or attachment to existence; after which, it entered itself into the supreme bliss of nirvana.

This desire for rest in the extinction of all desire, so congenial to the oriental mind, presents no attraction to the hardier races of the west and north. It may be, in fact, a temperamental feature, determined by subtle climatic conditions, and racial peculiarities; but it offers no allurements to natures that have learned to measure the fulness of the charm of existence, by the amount of energy evoked and sustained; or have seen that "pleasure is but the reflex of unimpeded energy." Rest is only valued by us as the condition of a fresh departure and of renewed activity. Tarrying for a time in any harbour of existence, the inevitable longing arises for another sight of the great Ocean and a new voyage.

The last ground on which metempsychosis may be advocated, belongs to the metaphysic of physics. As an argument it has often been implied, when it has not been expressly affirmed. Even the imaginative guesses and surmisings of the primitive tribes may have grown unconsciously out of a speculative root, which their authors were incompetent to grasp. That philosophical root is the uniformity in the amount of spiritual existence: the conviction that, since the quantity of matter is neither increased or diminished, it is the same with the quantity of spirit; that it is neither added to, nor taken from, at any moment of

time. It is a doctrine of modern science that there is a uniform stock of energy within the universe which neither increases nor decreases, but which incessantly changes its form and manifestations; dissolving, retiring, re-emerging; appearing, disappearing, and returning,—the proteus of the physical world. Is there a phoenix in the spiritual realm, corresponding to this proteus in the material sphere? It is affirmed that while the amount of material existence remains stationery, if the quantity of spiritual existence was swiftly to increase at one end, with no corresponding diminution at the other, *i.e.* if the birth of the spirits of the human race was a new creation—multitudes every instant of time darting out of nonentity into manifested being—and if their death was a simple transference to some new abode, this incessant and rapid increase would overstock the universe.

Now, since no physical power is ever lost, all force being simply transformed, if the doctrine of the conservation of energy be applied to the sphere of moral and spiritual life, two alternative theories alone are possible: either pre-existence and immortality combined, or emanation and absorption. Whether the latter is materialistic or pantheistic matters not, except for the name we choose to adopt; the essence of the doctrine is the same. It is self-evident that if the amount of spiritual existence is *not* increased every moment, the pre-existence of all souls that are born, before their incarnation in the flesh, is as certain as their immortality. The one carries the other with it, or is carried by it; they are, indeed, not two doctrines but two sides of the same doctrine. Thus the number of souls in the universe will be a

fixed and constant quantity. If the conservation of energy be true of spiritual existence, and the soul is to survive the death of the body, then it lived before the body was vitalized. If it is never to be extinguished, it never was produced. It was probably the force of this consideration that led the acute mind of David Hume to affirm that "metempsychosis is the only system of this kind (*i.e.* of immortality) that Philosophy can hearken to" (Phil. Works, iv. p. 404). He "says what is incorruptible must also be ingenerable." "The soul, if immortal, existed before our birth" (p. 400). In the same connection he acutely suggests "how to *dispose of* the infinite number of posthumous existences ought to embarrass the religious theory" (p. 404). With this we may associate a remark of Shelley: "If there are no reasons to suppose that we have existed before that period at which our existence apparently commences, then there are no grounds for supposing that we shall continue to exist after our existence has apparently ceased." (Essays, p. 58). The "continual influx of beings," without a corresponding egress, is a difficulty which will seem insuperable to many minds. There is a growing *consensus* of opinion amongst spiritualists and materialists alike, that the quantity both of matter and of force within the universe suffers no diminution and no enlargement: loss in one direction being invariably and necessarily balanced by gain in another, and all the phenomenal changes in nature being simply a matter of exchange—a transposition of elements, the sum of which is constant. If this be so, it has an important bearing both on the survival of the soul after death, and on its pre-ex-

istence; the two doctrines standing and falling together.

As to the permanence of the materials which compose the body, when the organization is broken up and disintegrated, there is no debate. The survival, in some form or other, of what we call the mind, soul, or conscious ego, and what a materialist psychology terms vital force, is also conceded. Neither is annihilated; they are only transmuted or transformed. But the controversy remains after this concession, and underlies it. The alterations which the body undergoes can be traced, because it continues visible after death. Its changes can be experimentally investigated, because its transformations are slowly effected. But the transformations and changes of the soul, or vital principle, cannot be traced. The question, however, which remains to be disposed of, on grounds of probability, is not whether it does or does not survive. Its survival is conceded, and maintained as axiomatic. The only controversy is, *in what form does it survive?* Is it refunded to the universe, as material substance is restored, to be worked up into new forms, by the protoplasmic force that originally made it what it was? or, does it survive, with its individuality and identity unbroken? *That* is the controversy, between the materialist and the spiritualist. May not the latter be abandoning one half of his territory, or at least surrendering one of his positions, and thus weakening his ultimate defence, if he throws away the doctrine of pre-existence? It seems difficult to maintain, on rational grounds, that the sum of finite existence is being perpetually filled up before, with no corresponding diminution behind; a distinctly quantitative in-

crease in front, with no decrease to balance it in the rear. Over-population in the mother country has necessitated emigration to the colonies. But on the theory of incessant miraculous increase, there is no conceivable colony in the universe that would not be already over-stocked, and where the arrival of any emigrants from the parent country would not be unwelcome.

In this connection, it is worthy of note how vaguely and capriciously the immortality of the brute creation is spoken of in comparison with the immortality of man. By many, who are confident of their own survival, the immortality of animals is considered a curious and possibly an interesting question, but speculatively unimportant and theoretically indeterminable. How much depends on the solution of the problem of the destination of *life* is not perceived. For example, we hear it often said, there can be no objection to the immortality of the *higher* animals. But scientific rigour will not permit a line of demarcation to be drawn between the animal races. They all shade into one another. Are we then prepared to admit the immortality of every creature in which there is the faintest adumbration of intelligence? and if so, of every one in which is 'the breath of life.' If we do admit this, then the intelligence which we find in the dog, the beaver, the bee, and the ant, which does not 'perish everlastingly,' is *conserved* somewhere, after the dissolution of the bodies of these animals. But how vast the Hades, stocked with the spiritual part of every creature that has ever lived and died upon our planet from primeval time! When the prolific increase of the tribes of animated nature is realised, and


the enormous cycles of time during which the succession has been kept up, imagination sinks paralysed before the conception of any shadowy storehouse, in which these creatures continue to live, far less to flourish. The supposition is *felo-de-se*. But if we abandon the immortality of all, can we retain the immortality of any? Is not transmigration, in this case, the most probable hypothesis? Is not the notion of a uniform stock of vital energy, which passes and repasses endlessly throughout the organized tribes of nature, the most consistent theory we can frame? No one need hesitate to apply the doctrine of metempsychosis to the animal world, although he may doubt its applicability to the human race: while, if we reject it in the lower sphere, and, in consequence, hold that the intelligence and devotion of the dog perish, it may be hard to maintain that the reason and affection of man survive.

A special difficulty, however, arises at this point. It is, perhaps, the chief objection to the doctrine of metempsychosis. How does 'the life' that survives unextinguished pass from one organized form to another? We can trace its signs or manifestations till they cease at death. So far all is clear. But what *becomes* of it on the dissolution of the body?

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?

If not extinguished, it merely retreats and reappears. But how does it connect itself with the new organization, into which it subsequently enters, as an animating and vitalising principle? This is a difficulty not only

in the way of transmigration, but of survival in any form. The present connection between soul and body is known so far: and, in the absence of experience of separation, we have some psychological facts which suggest that the union is not inseparable, that the soul is not a function of the body, but that in each individual we have two principles, if not two substances, temporarily united. When they are separated, however, as they are at death, how does the spiritual part continue to live disembodied? and how does it unite itself, or how is it united with a new corporeal form? Does it ally itself with its new organization, in some cases, by a voluntary act? in others, by a passive and involuntary process? If the latter, there must be some law by which the change is effected, some method of development determining the movement in a cycle. If the act is voluntary, we have a fresh difficulty to face, viz., that the spiritual principle must be able to select its new abode. It must, therefore, either choose one out of many, or it must enter into the only one that is fitted for its reception. It must be either wholly active, or wholly passive, or partly active and partly passive. We can state the alternatives, but how to choose amongst them, how to select any one of them is a difficulty that remains. The spirit shrinks from a ghostly or disembodied state as its perpetual destiny nearly as much as it recoils from the sleep of nirvana: but how to find a body, how to incarnate itself, or even to conceive the process by which it could, by any foreign agency, be robed anew, remains a puzzle; even while, as Henry Vaughan expresses it,



It feels through all this fleshly dresse
Bright shootes of everlastingnesse.

These are difficulties which attend every attempt to form definite conceptions as to the details of this question. Mr Greg is wise when he says of the belief in immortality, 'Let it rest in the vague, if you would have it rest unshaken.'

A farther point, however, is to be noted. Although we may validly object to have the roots of our convictions exhibited to view, as we decline to expose the rootlets of a plant to 'the nipping and the eager air' of winter, it is a signal gain to integrity of belief that the scientific spirit of our age demands the removal of all presuppositions which cannot be verified, and insists that those which remain shall be luminous from root to branch. It does this with even more force and rigor, than Descartes employed, in his new method of research. So much intellectual mist has been allowed to gather and settle over this question of the soul's destiny, that when a breath of the east wind raises it, and shows how little is known or can be intelligently surmised, many desire that the obscuring curtain should speedily fall again. But in discussing the question of immortality it is above all things necessary that we keep modestly within the lines of veritable evidence; that we lean on no broken (if possible on no breakable) reed; and that, distinguishing between what we know and what we may only hope for, we mark the *alternatives* of the controversy, and the consequences that follow our premises, alike of affirmation and denial. If we reject the doctrine of pre-existence, for example, we must either believe in non-existence, or fall back on one or other of the two

opposing theories of creation and traduction : and, as we reject extinction, we may find that pre-existence has fewer difficulties to face than the rival hypotheses. Creation—or creationism, as it has sometimes been named—is the theory that every moment of time multitudes of new souls are simultaneously born, not sent down from a celestial source, but freshly made out of nothing, and placed in bodies prepared for them by a process of natural generation. It is curious to observe how vehemently the Cambridge Platonists recoiled from the notion of a pure spirit fresh from the hand of Deity being placed by him ‘in such a body as would presently defile his image.’ The idea of the Creator being *compelled* to add a spirit to the body, however and whenever a body might arise, according to natural law and process, seemed to them a monstrous infraction of Divine liberty. The theory of traduction seemed to them even worse, as it implied the derivation of the soul from at least two sources—from both parents ; and a substance thus derived was apparently composite and quasi-material.

It is easy to criticise the doctrine of Pre-existence, as held in the Pythagorean brotherhood, and taught by the mystic sage of Agrigentum, or even by Plato. The fantastic folly of the Brahminical teaching (as in the twelfth book of the laws of Manu) and the absurdity of Buddha’s transmigrations are apparent. But it is easier to follow Lucretius in his satire of it, than to appreciate the difficulty which gave it birth. As reproduced by Virgil and by Cicero, the genius of the Greek poets and philosophers lost the charm of its original setting : and I question if the surmises of Plato were fully appraised, till the *Phædo* itself experi-

enced metempsychosis in Wordsworth's 'Ode.' But stripped of all extravagance, and expressed in the modest terms of probability, the theory has immense speculative interest, and great ethical value. It is much to have the puzzle of the origin of evil thrown back for an indefinite number of cycles of lives, to have a workable explanation of *nemesis*, and of what we are accustomed to call the moral tragedies, and the untoward birth of a multitude of men and women. It is much, also, to have the doctrine of immortality lightened of its difficulties ; to have our immediate outlook relieved, by the doctrine that, in the soul's eternity, its pre-existence and its future existence are one. The retrospect may assuredly help the prospect. And if 'this grey dogma, fairly clear of doubt,' as Glanvill describes it, seems strange in the absence of all remembered traces of past existence, it is worth considering that in a future state a point will be reached when pre-existence will be true. If we are to be immortal, immediately after death metempsychosis will have become a realised experience ; and our present lives will stand in the same relation to the future, on which we shall then have entered, as that in which the past now stands to our present life.

Henry More said that he produced his golden key of pre-existence 'only at a dead lift, when no other method would satisfy him, touching the ways of God, that by this hypothesis he might keep his heart from sinking.' Whether *we* make use of it or not, we ought to realise its alternatives. They are these. Either all life is extinguished and resolved, through an absorption and reassimilation of the vital principle everywhere : or a perpetual miracle goes on, in the incessant

and rapid increase in the amount of spiritual existence within the universe ; and, while human life survives, the intelligence and the affection of the lower animals perish everlastingly.

Man's life is like a Sparrow, mighty King !
That—while at banquet with your Chiefs you sit
Housed near a blazing fire—is seen to flit
Safe from the wintry tempest. Fluttering,
Here did it enter ; there, on hasty wing,
Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold ;
But whence it came we know not, nor behold
Whither it goes. Even such, that transient Thing,
The human Soul ; not utterly unknown
While in the Body lodged, her warm abode ;
But from what world She came, what woe or weal
On her departure waits, no tongue hath shown ;
This mystery if the Stranger can reveal,
His be a welcome cordially bestowed.

Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Part i., § 15.

THEISM—DESIDERATA IN THE THEISTIC ARGUMENT.


(*The British Quarterly Review*, July 1871.)

It is a philosophical commonplace that all human questioning leads us back to certain ultimate truths or facts which cannot be further analysed, and of which no other explanation can be given than that they are, or that *they exist*. Every explanation of the Universe rests and must rest on the inexplicable. The borders of the known are fringed with mystery, the limits of the knowable are bounded by it, and all the data of our knowledge recede into it, by longer or shorter pathways. Thus, while it is the very mystery of the universe that has given rise to human knowledge, by quickening the curiosity of man, the same mystery prescribes a limit to his insight, continues to overshadow him in his researches, and to girdle him, in his latest discoveries, with its veil. In wonder all Philosophy is born ; in wonder it always ends ; and, to adopt a well-known illustration, our knowledge is a stream, of which the source is hid, and the destination unknown, although we may surmise regarding both.

But the mystery, which thus envelopes the origin and the destination of the Universe, is not absolutely overpowering ; nor does it lay an arrest on the human faculties in their efforts to understand the universe as a whole. Man has always striven to penetrate farther and farther into the shrine of nature, and to

record in the several sciences the stages of his progress. These sciences are of necessity inter-related, and mutually dependent. Each section of knowledge has a doorway leading into others on either side of it, and one which opens behind into the region of first principles. It is not, however, necessary that the specialist in one department should know much of other fields of research. Separate inquirers may content themselves with their special region of phenomena and its laws, which they seek to understand more perfectly, and to interpret more clearly, without going beyond their own domain. It is by such division of labour, and concentration of aim, that the achievements of modern science have been won. These achievements have been singularly great and fruitful ; widening our knowledge of phenomena, and annexing province after province to the territory of science. Such conquests, however, do not add much to our knowledge of Nature as a whole. They tell us nothing of its essence, or first principle, or ultimate cause. It is only by withdrawing from the sphere in which one has been labouring as a specialist, and, without entering the borderland of any new science, receding behind them all, and contemplating the entire group from a distance, that their value as a contribution to our knowledge of the universe can be discerned. Each of the sciences has its ideal, but the goal of universal science is the discovery of one ultimate principle, which will be explanatory of all observed phenomena.

And the speculative thinker has a similar aim. The perennial question of philosophy is the discovery of the central principle of Existence, its haunting problem is the ultimate explanation of the universe of being.



The universe, what is it? Whence is it? Whither is it tending? Can we know anything beyond the fleeting phenomena of its ever unfolding life, and ever varying history? Is its source, and therefore its central principle, accessible to our faculties of knowledge?

This too is the distinctive problem of rational Theology. Philosophy and science both lead up to philosophical theology as to the apex of human knowledge. The latter may be fitly called the *scientia scientiarum*. Questions as to the nature and origin of Life upon our planet, the nature of Force or Energy, the problems of Substance and of Cause, the questions of the Absolute and Infinite, all centre in this, 'What is the Ultimate Principle of the Universe, the ἀρχή of all Existence?' They are each and all different ways of raising the same question, and expressing it, from the point of view which the questioner occupies. Speculative philosophy and science deal proximately, it is true, with the problems of finite existence, existence as presented to us in the surrounding universe, and the laws which regulate it; but they covertly imply and remotely lead up to the question we have stated. They are the several approaches to that science which sits enthroned on the very summit of human knowledge.

Nevertheless, the science of speculative theology is as yet lamentably incomplete. We have scores of treatises devoted to the subject, and numerous professed solutions of the problem. But we have not, in the English language, a single treatise which even contemplates a philosophical arrangement and classification of the various theories, actual and possible, upon the subject. It is otherwise with the great questions of intellectual and ethical philosophy. There

are elaborate and almost exhaustive schemes of theories on the nature of perception, or our knowledge of the external world, the laws of association, the problem of causality, and the nature of conscience. But we look in vain for any similar attempt to classify the several lines of argument, or possible modes of theistic proof, so as to present a tabular view of the various doctrines on this subject. We are limited to the well-known but precarious scheme of proofs *a priori* and *a posteriori*,* and to the more accurate classification of Kant, the ontological, the cosmological, and the physico-theological proofs, with his own argument from the moral faculty or practical reason. In addition, we are not aware of any English treatise specially devoted to the history of this branch of philosophical literature, with the exception of a brief essay by Dr Waterland, in which he traverses a small section of the whole area; and that not as the historian of philosophical opinion, but in the interest of a special theory.†

The present condition of 'natural theology' in England is scarcely creditable to the critical insight of the British mind. There has been little earnest

* The terms *a priori* and *a posteriori* are misleading. Arguments called *a priori* are usually mixed, and involve elements strictly *a posteriori*: experiential facts are inlaid within them. And the proof *a posteriori* ascends (if it ascends high enough) by the aid of *a priori* principles. In its rise to the supersensible, it makes use of the noetic principle of the reason.

† For other contributions we are indebted to the historians of philosophy (see especially Ritter, Buhle, Zeller, and Ueberweg) and of Christian doctrine, such as Neander and Hagenbach, and to one of the cleverest of French thinkers, Rémusat, who, in his 'Philosophie Religieuse,' has acutely criticised some of the developments of opinion since the rise of modern philosophy, and more especially some of the latest phenomena of British and Continental thought.

grappling with the problem, in the light of the past history of opinion; and traditionary stock-proofs have been relied upon with a perilous complacency. The majority of theologians trust to a futile and treacherous argument, from what has long been termed 'final causes;' and, when beaten from that field, at once by the rigour of speculative thought and the march of the inductive sciences, the refuge that is found in the region of our moral nature is scarcely less secure, while the character of the theistic argument from conscience is suffered to remain in the obscurity which still shrouds it.

In the following pages we propose to show the ultimate invalidity of several popular modes of proof, and to suggest a few desiderata in the future working out of the problem.

It may be useful to preface our criticism by a classification of theistic theories. This, however, is offered rather as a provisional chart of opinion, than as an exhaustive summary of all the arguments which have been advanced, or of all possible varieties in the mode of proof. Many thinkers, perhaps the majority, and notably the mediæval schoolmen, have combined several distinct lines of evidence; and have occasionally borrowed from a doctrine which they explicitly reject some of the very elements of their own argument. They have often forsaken their theory at a crisis, and not observed their departure from the data on which they profess exclusively to build.

The first class of theories are strictly *ontological* or *onto-theological*. They attempt to prove the objective existence of Deity from the subjective notion of necessary existence in the human mind; or from the

assumed objectivity of space and time, which they interpret as the attributes of a necessary Substance.

The second are the *cosmological* or *cosmo-theological* proofs. They essay to prove the existence of a supreme self-existent Cause from the mere fact of the existence of the world, by the application of the principle of causality. Starting with the postulate of any single existence whatsoever—the world or anything in the world—and proceeding to argue backwards or upwards, the existence of one supreme Cause is held to be ‘a regressive inference’ from the existence of these effects. As there cannot, it is alleged, be an infinite series of derived or dependent effects, we at length reach the infinite or uncaused Cause. This has been termed the proof from contingency, as it rises from the contingent to the necessary, from the relative to the absolute. But the cosmological proof may have a threefold character, according as it is argued: 1. That the necessary is the antithesis of the contingent; or, 2. That because some being now exists, some being must have always existed; or, 3. That because we now exist, and have not caused ourselves, some cause adequate to produce us must also now exist.

A third class of proofs are somewhat inaccurately termed *physico-theological*, a phrase equally descriptive of them and of those last mentioned. They are rather *teleological* or *teleo-theological*. The former proof started from any finite existence. It did not scrutinise its character, but rose from it to an absolute cause, by a direct mental leap or inference. This scrutinises the effect, and finds traces of intelligence within it. It detects the presence or the vestiges of

mind in the particular effect it examines, viz., the phenomena of the world, and from these it infers the existence of Deity. One branch of it is the popular argument from design, or adaptation in nature, the fitness of means to ends implying, it is said, an Architect or designer. It may be called *techno-theology*; and is variously treated, according as the technologist, (α) starts from human contrivance and reasons to nature; or, (β) begins with nature's products, and reasons toward man. Another branch is the argument from the order of the universe, from the types or laws of nature, indicating, it is said, an Orderer or law-giver, whose intelligence we thus discern. It is not, in this case, that the adjustment of means to ends proves the presence of a mind that has adjusted them. But the law itself, in its regularity and continuity, implies a mind behind it, an intelligence animating the otherwise soulless universe. It might be termed *nomotheology* or *typo-theology*. Under the same general category may be placed the argument from animal instinct, which is distinct at once from the evidence of design, and that of law or typical order. To take one instance: The bee forms its cells, following unconsciously, and by what we term 'instinct,' the most intricate mathematical laws. There is mind, there is thought in the process; but whose mind, whose thought? Not the animal's, because it is not guided by experience. It works automatically, unconscious of the end it is accomplishing. Nevertheless, the result arrived at is one which could be reached by man only through the exercise of reason of the very highest order. And the question arises, Are we not warranted in supposing that a hidden pilot guides the

bee, concealed behind what we call its instinct? We do not, meanwhile, discuss the merit of this argument; but merely indicate the difference between it and the argument from design, and that from law and order. It is not a question of the adjustment of phenomena. It is the demand of the intellect for a cause adequate to account for a unique phenomenon. It approaches the cosmo-theological argument as closely as it approaches the techno-theological one; and yet it is different from both. The cosmo-theological endeavours to rise from any particular effect to its cause, and by a backward mental bound to reach an infinite source. The techno-theological attempts to rise from the adjustment of means to ends, to an adjuster or contriver. This simply asks, Whence comes the mind that is here in operation, perceived by its effects? Is not mind present within the observed phenomena?

The next class of arguments are based upon the moral nature of man. They may be termed in general *ethico-theological*; and there are, at least, two main branches of this line of proof. The former is the argument from conscience, as a moral law, pointing to Another within it, or above it; the law that is 'in us, yet not of us'—not the 'autonomy' of Kant, but a *theonomy*—bearing witness to a legislator above. Conscience is interpreted as the moral echo within us of a Voice louder and vaster without. And, as evidence, it is direct and intuitive, not inferential. The latter is the argument of Kant (in which he was anticipated by several, notably by Raimund of Sabunde). It is indirect and inferential, based upon the present phenomena of our moral nature. The moral law declares that evil is punishable and to be punished, that virtue

is rewardable and to be rewarded; but in this life they are not so: therefore, said Kant, there must be a futurity in which the rectification will take place, and a moral Arbiter by whom it will be effected.

Finally, there is the argument, which, when philosophically unfolded, is the only unassailable stronghold of theism, its one impregnable fortress, that of *intuition*. It is simply the utterance of the human soul, in the presence of an Object which it does not so much discover by searching, as *apprehend in the act of revealing itself*; and it may be called—keeping to the analogy of our former terms—*eso-theological* or *esoterico-theological*. It is not an argument, an inference, a conclusion. It is an attestation, the vision of a Reality which is apprehended by the instinct of the worshipper, and the inspiration of the poet, as much as by the gaze of the speculative reason. It is not the verdict of one part of human nature, of reason, or the conscience, the feelings, or the affections; but of the whole being, when thrown into the poise or attitude of recognition, before the presence of the self-revealing Object.

There are several phases of this, which we term the *eso-theological* proof. We see its most rudimentary traces in the polytheism of the savage mind, and its unconscious *personification* of nature's forces. When this crude conception of diverse powers in partial antagonism gives place to the notion of one central Power, the instinct asserts itself in the verdict of the common mind as to One who is above, yet kindred to it. It is attested by the feeling of dependence, and by the instinct of worship, which bears witness to an outward object corresponding to the inward impulse,

in analogy with all the other instincts of our nature. It is farther attested by the poet's interpretation of nature, the verdict of the great seers, that the universe is pervaded by a supreme Spirit, 'haunted for ever by the eternal mind.' We find its highest attestation in that consciousness of the Infinite itself, which is man's highest prerogative as a rational creature.

We have thus the following chart of theistic theories.

- I. Onto-theological—
 - 1. From necessary notion to reality.
 - α Anselm's proof.
 - β Descartes' first argument.
 - 2. From space and time, as attributes to their substance.
- II. Cosmo-theological—
 - 1. Antithetic.
 - 2. Causal.
 - 3. 'Sufficient reason.' (Leibnitz.)
- III. Teleo-theological—
 - 1. Techno-theology.
 - 2. Typo-theology.
 - 3. (Animal instinct).
- IV. Ethico-theological—
 - 1. Deonto-theological. (direct.)
 - 2. Indirect and inferential. (Kant.)
- V. Eso-theological—
 - 1. The infinite. (Fenelon. Cousin.)
 - 2. The world-soul.
 - 3. The instinct of worship.

In addition, we might mention several subsidiary or sporadic proofs which have no philosophical relevancy, but have some theological suggestiveness, viz., 1. The historical consensus. 2. The felicity of the theist. 3. The testimony of revelation.

It is unnecessary to discuss all these alleged proofs at length ; but the powerlessness of the most of them

to establish the transcendent fact they profess to reach, demands more serious thought than it has received.

The ontological proof has always possessed a singular fascination to the speculative mind. It promises so much, and would accomplish so much, if only it were valid! It would be so powerful, were it only conclusive! But had demonstration been possible, the theistic argument, like the proofs of mathematics, would have carried conviction not only to the majority of thinkers, but also to the universal mind, long ago. The historical failure is signal. Whether in the form in which it was originally cast by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, or in the more elaborate theory of Descartes, or as presented in the ponderous English treatises of Cudworth, Henry More, and Dr Samuel Clarke, it is altogether a *petitio principii*. Under every modification, it reasons from the necessary notion of God, to his necessary existence; or from the necessary existence of space and time, which are assumed to be the properties or attributes of a substance, to the necessary existence of that substance. A purely subjective necessity of the reason is carried from within outwards, and is held to be conclusive in the realm of objective reality. But the very essence of the problem is the discovery of an intellectual path by which one may pass from the notions of the intellect to the realities of the universe beyond it. We may not, therefore, summarily identify the two, and, at the very outset, take the existence of the one as demonstrative of the other. In every affirmation of real existence, we pass from a notion which has entered the mind—or is innate—to the realm of objective being, which exists independently of us, who affirm it; and how to pass

warrantably from the ideal world within, to the real world without, is the very problem to be solved. To be valid at its starting-point, the ontological argument ought to prove that the notion of God is so fixed in the very root of our intellectual nature that it cannot be dislodged from the mind ; and this some thinkers, such as Clarke, have had the hardihood to affirm. To be valid as it proceeds, it ought to prove that the notion, thus necessary in thought, has a real counterpart in the realm of things ; in order that it may vindicate the step, it so quietly takes, from the ideal notion to the world of real existence. It passes from thought to things, just as we pass from logical premiss to conclusion. But, to be consistent, its advocates must rest contented with an ideal conclusion, deduced from the ideal premiss. And thus, the only valid issue of the ontological argument is a system of absolute idealism, of which the strict theological corollary is pantheism. But as this is not the Deity the argument essays to reach, it must be pronounced illogical throughout.

Thus the ontological argument identifies the logical and the real. The illicit procedure in which it indulges would be more apparent than it is to *a priori* theorists, if the object they imagine they have reached were visible in nature, and apprehensible by the senses. To pass from the ideal to the real sphere by a transcendental act of thought is seen at once to be unwarrantable in the case of sense-perception. In this case, it is the presence of the object that alone warrants the transition, else we should have as much right to believe in the real existence of the hippogriff as in the reality of the horse. But when the object is invisible, and is at the same time supreme or ulti-

mate Being, the speculative thinker is more easily deceived. We must, therefore, in every instance ask him, where is the bridge from the notion to the reality? What is the nature of the plank thrown across the chasm which separates these two regions (to use an old philosophical phrase), 'by the whole diameter of being?' We can never, by any vault of logic, pass from the one to the other. We are imprisoned within the region of mere subjectivity in all *a priori* demonstration, and how to escape from it, is (as we said before) the very problem to be solved.

Anselm, who was the first to formulate the ontological proof, argued that our idea of God is the idea of a being than whom we can conceive nothing greater. But, inasmuch as real existence is greater than mere thought, the existence of God is guaranteed in the very idea of the most perfect being; otherwise, the contradiction of the existence of one still more perfect would emerge. The error of Anselm was the error of his age, the main blot in the whole mediæval philosophy. It first seemed to him that reason and instinctive faith were separated by a wide interval, if not by an impossible chasm. He then wished to have a reason for his faith, cast in the form of a syllogism. And he failed to see, or adequately to understand, that all demonstrative reasoning hangs upon axiomatic truths which cannot be demonstrated, not because they are inferior to reason, but because they are superior to reasoning, because they are the pillars upon which all ratiocination rests. This was his first mistake. Dissatisfied with the data upon which all reasoning hangs, he preferred the stream to the fountain-head; while he virtually thought, that by

going down the stream, he could reach the fountain! But his second mistake was the greater of the two. He confounded the necessities of thought with the necessities of the universe. He passed, without a warrant, from his own subjective notion, to the region of objective reality. And it has been the same with all, who have since followed him, in this ambitious path. After witnessing the elaborate intellectual feats which the mediæval theologians performed, and the artificial strain to which they subjected their intellects in the process, we see the chasm still yawning between the abstract notions of the mind and the concrete facts of the universe. It is remarkable that any of them were satisfied with the accuracy of their reasonings. We can explain it only by the intellectual habit of the age, and the (misread) traditions of the Stagyrte. They made use, unconsciously, of that intuition which carries us across the gulf, and they misread the process by which they reached the other side. They set down to the credit of their intellect what was due to the necessities of the moral nature, and to the voice of the heart.

Descartes was the most illustrious thinker, who, at the dawn of modern philosophy, developed the scholastic theism. While inaugurating a new method of experimental research, he retained the most characteristic doctrine of mediæval ontology. He argued that necessary existence is as essential to the idea of an all-perfect being, as the equality of its three angles to two right angles is essential to the idea of a triangle. But though he admits that his 'thought imposes no necessity on things,' he contradicts his own admission by adding, 'I cannot conceive God

except as existing, and hence it follows that existence is inseparable from him.' In his 'Principles of Philosophy' we find the following argument :—

'As the equality of its three angles to two right angles is necessarily comprised in the idea of the triangle, the mind is firmly persuaded that the three angles of a triangle *are* equal to two right angles ; so from its perceiving necessary and eternal existence to be comprised in the idea which it has of an all-perfect being, it ought manifestly to conclude that this all-perfect being exists.'—(Pt. i. sec. 14.)

This argument is more formally expounded in his 'Reply to Objections to the Meditations,' thus :—

'Proposition I. The existence of God is known from the consideration of His nature alone. Demonstration : To say that an attribute is contained in the nature or in the concept of a thing, is the same as to say that the attribute is true of this thing, and that it may be affirmed to be in it. But necessary existence is contained in the nature or the concept of God. Hence, it may be with truth affirmed that necessary existence is in God, or that God exists.'

It is not difficult to show that, in this elaborate array of argumentation, Descartes is the victim of a subtle fallacy. Our conception of necessary existence cannot include the fact of necessary existence, for—to repeat what we have already said—the one is an ideal concept of the mind, the other is a fact of real existence. The one demands an object beyond the mind conceiving it, the other does not. All that the Cartesian argument could prove would be that the mental concept was necessary, not that the concept had a counterpart in the outer universe. It is, indeed, a necessary judgment that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, because this

is an *identical proposition*; the subject and the predicate are the same, the one being only an expansion of the other. We cannot, therefore, destroy the predicate and leave the subject intact. But it is otherwise when we affirm that any triangular object *exists*, we may then destroy the predicate 'existence,' and yet leave the subject (the notion of the triangle) intact in the mind.

It is true that Descartes has not limited himself to this futile *a priori* demonstration. He has buttressed his formal ontology by a much more suggestive argument; although logically, it is quite as inconclusive. He again reasons thus in his 'Principles:' We have the idea of an all-perfect being in the mind, but whence do we derive it? It is impossible that we can have an idea of anything, unless there be an original somewhere in the universe whence we derive it, as the shadow is the sign of a substance that casts it. But it is manifest that the more perfect cannot arise from the less perfect, and that which knows something more perfect than itself is not the cause of its own being. Since, therefore, we ourselves are not so perfect as the idea of perfection which we find within us, we are forced to believe that this idea in us is derived from a more perfect being above us, and consequently that such a being exists.

It will be observed that this second argument of Descartes is partly cosmological, although it ultimately merges in the ontological, and falls back upon it for support. Hence, Descartes himself called it an *a posteriori* argument. And it may therefore serve as a link of connection and transition to the second group in our scheme of theories.

Before passing to these, however, we may observe that the majority of *a priori* theorists, professing to conduct us to the desired conclusion along the level road of demonstration—while they all contradict their own principles, and furtively introduce the contingent facts of experience—have but a faint conception of the magnitude of the question at issue. To work out a demonstration as with algebraic formulæ, to contemplate the problem as one of mathematical science, under the light and guidance of the understanding alone, and unaided by the moral intuitions, betokens a lack of insight into the very problem in question. The Object, of which we are in search, is not a blank colourless abstraction, or necessary entity. Suppose that a supreme 'existence' were demonstrable, that bare entity is not the God of theism, the infinite Intelligence and Personality, of whose existence the human spirit desires some assurance, if it can be had. And a formal demonstration of a primitive source of existence (*more geometrico*) is of no theological value. As a mere *ultimatum*, its existence is conceded by every philosophical school, but it amounts to very little. It is an unilluminated, colourless, blank admission. So far as intellectual and moral recognition go, the object is an absolute zero, inaccessible alike to the reason and to the heart, before which the human spirit is either hopelessly perplexed, or absolutely paralysed.

The germs of the cosmological argument (as of the ontological) are found in the scholastic philosophy; although its elaboration was left to the first and second periods of the modern era. Diodorus of Tarsus, John Damascenus, Hugo of St Victor, and Peter of Poitiers, have each contributed to the development of this mode

of proof. It is the argument *a contingentia mundi*, or *ex rerum mutabilitate*; and may be briefly stated thus: If the contingent exists, the necessary also exists. I myself, the world, the objects of sense, are contingent existences, and there must be a cause of these, which cause must be also an effect. Go back, therefore, to the cause of that cause, and to its cause again, and you must at length pause in the regress; and by rising to a First Cause, you escape from the contingent and reach the necessary. From the observation of the manifold sequences of nature, you rise to the causal fountain-head, since you cannot travel backwards for ever along an infinite line of dependent sequences.

This argument is as illusory as the ontological one, from which indeed it borrows any strength it has, and of which it shares the weakness. Why should we ever pause, in the regressive march of thought, along the lines of phenomenal sequence in the universe, of which we only observe the slow evolution through immeasurable time? How do we reach a fountain-head at all? We are not warranted in saying that because we cannot think out an endless regress of infinite antecedents, *therefore* we must assume a first cause. For that assumption of the ἀρχή, of an uncaused cause, when we have wearied ourselves in mounting the steps of the ladder of finite agency, is to the speculative reason equally illicit, as its assumption would be, when standing on the first rung of the ladder. Why should we not assume it, why should we not step over to it at the first, if we may do so, or are compelled to do so, at the last? The fact of our having wandered a little way backwards from our present standing ground, amongst antecedent phenomena, will not warrant our

ultimately leaving the sphere of phenomena unless we are warranted in doing so before we begin our wanderings. The cosmological argument starts from the concrete, and works its way backward along the channel of the concrete, till it turns round, faces the abstract, looks up, takes wing, and 'suddenly scales the height.' The speculative reason at length essays to cross over the chasm between the long series of dependent sequences, and the original or uncreated cause ; but it does so furtively, and illegitimately. It crosses over by an unknown path, to an unknown source, supposed to be necessary.

Furthermore, what light is cast by this ambitious regress, on the nature of the fountain-head ? How is the being whom we are supposed at length to have reached, the source of that series of effects, which are supposed to have sprung from his creative fiat ? If we experienced a difficulty in our regress in connecting the last link of the chain with the *causa causans*, we experience the same or a counter-difficulty in our descent, in connecting the first link of the same chain with the creative energy. And how, it may be further asked, do we connect the supreme cause with intelligence, or with personality ? We have called this assumption of an ἀρχή, a leap in the dark ; and we ask, how can we ever escape from the phenomenal series of effects, which we perceive in nature, to the noumenal source of which we are in search ? By the observation of what is, or of what has been, we merely ascend backwards in time, through the ever-changing forms of phenomenal energy (our effects being only developed causes, and our causes latent or potential effects), but we never reach a noumenal source

That is reserved for the flight of the speculative reason, soaring into the empyrean, beyond the very atmosphere of thought.

It is constantly forgotten that in this controversy the admission that *some kind of being*, or substance, must always have existed in the universe, is the common property of all the systems of philosophy. Materialist and idealist, theist and atheist, alike admit it; but its admission is theologically worthless. 'The notion of a God,' says Sir William Hamilton, in his admirable manner, 'is not contained in the notion of a mere first cause; for, in the admission of a first cause, atheist and theist are at one.' So far as this argument can carry us, the being assumed to exist is, therefore, a blank essence, a mere zero, an everything= nothing. Nature remains a fathomless abyss, telling us nought of its whence or whither. It is still the fountain-head of inscrutable mystery, which over-shadows and overmasters us. The *natura naturata* casts no light on the *natura naturans*. The systole and diastole of the universe goes on; the flux and the reflux of its phenomena are endless. That something always was, everyone admits. The question between the rival philosophic schools is as to what that something was, and is. We may choose to call it 'the first cause,' (an explanation which implies that our notion of endless regression has broken down) and we may say that we have reached the notion of an un-caused cause. But is that a notion at all? Is it intelligible, representable, conceivable? Do we not, in the very assumption, bid farewell to reason, and fall back on some form of faith?

Finally, the moment that the supposed cause is

reached, does not the principle that was supposed to bring us to it break down? And by thus destroying the bridge behind us, the very principle of causality, which was valid in our progress and ascent, valid in the limited area of experience—now emptied of all philosophical meaning, when we desert experience, and rise to the transcendental—invalidates the whole series of effects, which are supposed to have sprung from it? We need not rise above any single event, contingent and finite, to any other event as its proximate cause; if, when we have essayed to carry out the regress, we stop short, and, crying *εὐχρησ*, congratulate ourselves that we have at length reached an uncaused cause.

Thus, when the cosmological theorist asks: Does the universe contain its own cause within itself? and, answering in the negative, asserts that it must therefore have sprung from a supra-mundane source, we may validly reply, may it not have been eternal? *May not its history be but the ceaseless evolution, the endless transformation of unknown primeval forces?* So far as this argument conducts us, we affirm that it may. And to pass from the present contingent state of the universe to its originating Source, the theorist must make use of the ontological inference, of which we have already indicated the double flaw. There is one point of affinity between all forms of the cosmological and ontological arguments. They all profess to reach a necessary conclusion. They are not satisfied with the contingent or the probable. But the notion of necessity is a logical notion of the intellect. It exists in thought alone. Whoever, therefore, would escape from the ideal sphere must forego the evidence of necessity. Real existence is not and never can be

synonymous with necessary existence. For necessary existence is always ideal. It is reached by a formal process. It is the product of pure thought.

The *teleological* argument is the one which has been most popular in England. It has carried (apparent) conviction to many minds, which have seen the futility of the *a priori* processes of proof. It is the stock argument of British 'natural theology ;' in explanation and defence of which, volume upon volume has been written. It is, as Kant remarked, 'the oldest, the clearest, and the most adapted to the ordinary human reason.' Nevertheless, its failure is the more signal, considering that its reputation has been so great, and its claim so vast. The argument has at least three branches, to which we have already referred. We confine ourselves meanwhile to the first of the three, the techno-theological argument, or that which reasons from the phenomena of design to a designing intelligence.

The following is the argument, stated in brief compass. We see marks of adaptation, of purpose, or of foresight in objects, which—as we learn from experience—proceed from the contrivance of man. We see similar marks of design or adaptation in nature. We are therefore warranted in inferring a world-designer ; and, from the indefinite number of these, an infinite designer ; and from their harmony, his unity. Or thus—We see the traces of wise and various purpose everywhere in nature. But nature could not of herself have fortuitously produced this arrangement. It could not have fallen into such harmony by accident. Therefore the cause of this wise order cannot be a blind, unintelligent principle, but must be a free and rational

mind. The argument is based upon analogy (and might be termed analogical, as strictly as technological). It asserts that because mind is concerned in the production of those objects of human art, which bear the traces of design, therefore a resembling mind must have been concerned in the production of nature, where we recognise similar traces of design.

The objections to this mode of proof are manifold. In the *first* place, admitting its partial validity, it falls short of the conclusion it attempts and professes to reach. For,

First, the effects it examines, and from which it infers a cause, are finite, while the cause it assumes is infinite; but the infinity of the cause can be no valid inference, from an indefinite number of finite effects. The indefinite is still the finite; and we can never perform the intellectual feat of educing the infinite from the finite by any multiplication of the latter. It has been said by an acute defender of the teleological argument, that the number of designed phenomena (indefinitely vast) with which the universe is filled, is sufficient to suggest the infinity of the designing cause. And it may be admitted that it is by the ladder of finite designs that we rise to some of our grandest conceptions of divine agency; but this ascent and survey are philosophically possible only after we have discovered from some other source that a divine being *exists*. The vastest range of design is of no greater validity than one attested instance of it, so far as proof is concerned. It is not accumulation of facts, but relevancy of data that we need.

But, secondly, at the best, we only reach an artificer or protoplast, not a creator,—one who arranged the

phenomena of the world, not the originator of its *substance*, — the architect of the cosmos, not the maker of the universe. Traces of mind discoverable amid the phenomena of the world cast no light upon the fact of its creation, or the nature of its source. There is no analogy between a human artificer arranging a finite mechanism, and a divine creator originating a world. Nor is there a parallel between the order, the method, and the plan of nature ; and what we see, when we watch a mechanician, working according to a plan, to produce a designed result. The only real parallel would be our perception, by sense, of *a world slowly evolving from chaos*, according to a plan previously foreseen. From the product, you are at liberty to infer a producer, only after having seen a similar product formerly produced. But the product which supplies the basis of this argument is unique and unparalleled ; ‘a singular effect,’ in the language of Hume, whose reasoning on this point has never been successfully assailed. And the main difficulty which confronts the theist, and which theism essays to remove, is precisely that which the consideration of design does not touch, viz., the *origin*, and not the *arrangements* of the universe. The teleological analogy is therefore worthless. There is no parallel, we repeat, between the process of manufacture, and the product of creation, between the act of a carpenter working with his tools to construct a cabinet, and the evolution of life in nature. On the contrary, there are many marked and sharply defined contrasts between them. For example, 1st, in the latter case, there is fixed and ordered regularity, no deviation from law ; in the former contingency enters, and often

alters and mars the work. Again, 2nd, the artificer simply uses the materials, which he finds lying ready to hand in nature. He detaches them from their 'natural' connections, and arranges them in a special fashion. But in nature, in the successive evolution of her organisms, there is no detachment, no displacement, no interference or isolation. All things are linked together. Every atom is dependent on every other atom, while the organisms seem to grow and develop 'after their kind' by some vital force, but by no manipulation similar to the architect's or builder's work. And yet again, 3rd, in the one case, the purpose is comprehensible—the end is foreseen from the beginning. We know what the mechanician desires to effect; but, in the other case, we have no clue to the 'thought' of the architect. Who will presume to say that he has adequately fathomed the purposes of nature, in the adjustment of any one of her phenomena to another?

Again, thirdly, the only valid inference from the phenomena of design would be that of a *phenomenal* first cause. To infer the existence of a personal divine Agent or Substance from the observation of the mechanism of the universe, is invalid. Where is the link connecting the traces of mind discerned in nature (those *vestigia animi*) with an agent who produced them? There is no such link. And in its absence the divine personality remains unattested. The same may be said of other attributes. Why should we rest in our inductive inference of one designer, from the phenomena of design, when these are so varied and complex? May not the complexity and variety of the phenomena suggest a polytheistic

group of ruling, yet conflicting powers? May not the two broadly marked classes of phenomena—the one good and the other evil, and both presenting the evidence of design—warrant the dualistic interpretation of two hostile deities, Ahriman and Ormuzd? Or, grant that in all that we observe a subtle and pervading ‘unity’ is found, and that as a consequence all existing arrangements point to one designer, why may not that Demiurgos have been himself at some remote period designed? And so on *ad infinitum*.

In the *second* place, not only is the argument defective—admitting its validity so far as it goes—but even partial validity cannot be conceded to it. The phenomena of design not only limit us to a finite designer, not only fail to lead us to the originator of the world, or to a personal first cause, but they confine us within the network of observed designs, and do not warrant the inference of a being detached from, or independent of these designs, and therefore able to modify them with a boundless reserve of power. These designs only suggest mechanical agency, working in fixed forms, according to prescribed law. In other words, the phenomena of the universe, which distantly resemble the operations of man, do not in the least suggest an agent, exterior to themselves. We are not intellectually constrained to ascribe the arrangement of means to ends in nature, to anything supra-mundane. Why may not these arrangements be due to a principle of Life imminent in nature, the mere endless evolution and development of the world itself? We observe that phenomenon A fits into phenomena B, C, and D, and we are therefore asked

to infer that A was fitted to its place by an intelligent mind. But suppose that A did not fit into B, C, or D, it might in some way unknown fit into X, Y, or Z. It would, in any case, be related to its antecedent and consequent phenomena. Our perception of the fitness or relationship, however, gives us no information beyond *the fact of fitness*. Any other (larger) conclusion is illegitimate.

It is often asserted that the phenomenal changes which we observe in nature, bear witness to their being *effects*. But what are effects? Transformed causes, modified by the transformation—mere changed appearances. If a cause is, in one sense, simply an effect concealed; the effect will be, in the same sense, merely the cause revealed. Now, we see the effects of volitional energy in the phenomena, which our consciousness forces us to trace back to our own personality, as their producing cause. But where do we see in nature, in the universe, phenomena which we are similarly warranted in construing as the effects of volitional energy, or of constructive intelligence? We are not conscious of the process of creation, nor do we perceive it. We have never witnessed the construction of a world. We only perceive the everlasting flux and reflux of phenomena, the ceaseless pulsation of nature's life,—evolution, transformation, birth, death, and birth again. But nature herself is dumb, as to her whence and her whither. Even, as we have already hinted, if we could detect a real analogy between the handiwork of man, and the processes or products of Nature, we are not warranted in saying that the constructive intelligence which explains the

one class of phenomena is the only possible explanation of the other.*

It is thus that no study of the arrangements and disposition of Nature's mechanism can carry us beyond the mechanism itself. The teleological argument professes to carry us above the chain of natural sequence. It proclaims that those traces of intelligence, which are everywhere visible, are a hint to us that long ago Mind was engaged in the construction of the universe. It is not that the phenomena

give forth at times
a little flash, a mystic hint

of a living Will within or behind the mechanism, of a Personality kindred to that of the artificer who observes it. With that suggestion, as will presently be seen, we should have no quarrel. But the teleological argument is said to bring us authentic tidings of the origin of the universe. If it does not carry us beyond the chain of dependent sequence it is of no value. Its advocates are aware of this, and they assert that it is able to carry us thus, beyond the adamantine links. But this is precisely what it fails to do. It can never assure us that those traces of intelligence, to which it invites our study, proceeded from a constructive mind, detached from the universe; or that, if they did, another mind did not fashion that mind, and so on *ad infinitum*. And thus, the perplexing puzzle of the origin of all things remains as insoluble as before.

Farther, the validity of the teleological argument

* And a possible explanation is of no use. It must be the *only possible* one. It has no theistic value, if it merely brings the hypothesis of a Deity within the limits of the conceivable.

depends upon the accuracy of our interpretation of those 'signs of intelligence' of which it makes so much, and which it interprets analogically in the light of human nature. To describe Nature as a mechanism is to employ a figure or metaphor, which may be helpful to our understanding of some of those features in which it resembles the 'works of art or man's device;' but it must never be forgotten that we are speaking metaphorically, not literally; and that it is one function of Philosophy to expose the illusion of mistaking the symbolic for the real, and if possible to eradicate it. The 'interpreter' of symbols is ever 'one among a thousand.' Who is to guarantee to us that we have not erred as to the meaning of Nature's secret tracery? Who is to secure us against mistake in this? Before we can deduce a conclusion so stupendous, from data so peculiar, we must be assured that no further insight will disallow the interpretation we have given. But is not this presumptuous in those who are at present acquainted, in a very partial manner, with the significance of a few of Nature's laws? Who will presume to say that he has penetrated to the radical meaning of any one of these laws? And, if he has not done so, can he validly single out the few resemblances he has detected, and explain the nature of the Infinite, by a sample of the finite? Nature is so inscrutable that, even when a law is discerned, the scientific explorer will not venture to say that he has so read its character, as to be sure that the law reflects the *ultimate* meaning of the several phenomena it explains. Nay, is he not convinced that other and deeper meanings must lie within them? A law of nature is but the generalized

expression of the extent to which our insight has as yet extended into the secret laboratory of her powers. As that insight deepens, our explanations change. We say that the lower law is resolved into a higher one, that the more detailed is taken up into the more comprehensive. But, if our scientific conceptions themselves are thus constantly changing and enlarging, how can we venture to erect our natural theology on the surface interpretation of the fleeting phenomena of the universe? 'Lo, these are a part of His ways, but how little a portion is known of Him!'

And this consideration may be advanced with equal force against those who dogmatically deny that there can be *any* resemblance between the forces of nature and the volitional energy of man. Both assumptions are equally arbitrary and illegitimate. We shall immediately endeavour to show, on what grounds, remote from teleology, we are warranted in believing that a resemblance does exist.


But, to return, if the inference from design is valid at all, it must be valid everywhere. All the phenomena of the world must yield it equally. No part of the universe is better made, than any other part. Every phenomenon is adjusted to every other phenomenon, with more or less of nearness or remoteness, as means to ends. Therefore, if the few phenomena which our teleologists single out from the many are a valid index to the character of the source whence they have proceeded, everything that exists must find its counterpart in the divine nature. If we are at liberty to infer an Archetype above, from the traces of mind beneath, on the same principle must not the phenomena of moral evil, malevolence, and sin be carried

upwards by analogy?—a procedure which would destroy the notion of Deity which the teleologists advocate. If we are at liberty to conclude that a few phenomena which seem to us designed, proceed from and find their counterpart in God, a reason must be shown why we should select a few, and pass over other phenomena of the universe. In other words, if the constructor of the universe designed anything by the agency he has established, must he not have designed all the results that actually emerge; and, if the character of the architect may be legitimately deduced from one, or a few designs, must we not take all existing phenomena into account, *to help out our idea of his character?* Look, then, at these phenomena as a whole. Consider the elaborate contrivances for inflicting pain, and the apparatus so exquisitely adjusted to produce a wholesale carnage of the animal tribes. They have existed from the very dawn of geologic time. The whole world teems with the proofs of such intended carnage. Every organism has parasites which prey upon it; and not only do the superior tribes feed upon the inferior (the less yielding to the greater), but the inferior prey, at the very same time, no less remorselessly upon the superior. If, therefore, the inference of benevolence be valid, the inference of malevolence is at least equally valid: and as equal and opposite, the one notion destroys the other.

Lastly, while we are philosophically impelled to consider all events as designed, if we interpret one as such, nay, to believe that the exact relation of every single atom to every other in the universe has been adjusted by 'a pre-established harmony,' the moment

we do thus universalize design, that moment the notion escapes us, is emptied of all philosophical meaning, or theological relevancy. Let it be granted that phenomenon A is related to phenomenon B, as means to end. Carry out the principle—as philosophy and science alike compel us to do,—and consider A as related by remoter adaptation to C, D, E, and all the other phenomena of the universe ; in short, regard every atom as inter-related to every other atom, every change as co-related to every other change ; then the notion of design breaks down, from the very width of the area it covers. We can understand a finite mechanician planning that a finite phenomenon shall be related to another finite phenomenon so as to produce a desired result ; but if the mechanician himself be a designed phenomenon, and all that he works upon be equally so, every single atom and every individual change being subtly interlaced and all reciprocally dependent, then the very notion of design vanishes. Seemingly valid on the limited area of finite observation and human agency, it disappears when the whole universe is seen to be one vast network of interconnected law and order.

Combining this objection with what may seem to be its opposite, but is really a supplement to it, we may again say, that we, who are a part of the universal order, cannot pronounce a verdict as to the intended design of the parts, until we are able to see the whole. If elevated to a station whence we could look down on the entire mechanism, if *outside* of the universe (a sheer impossibility to the creature), we might see the exact bearing of part to part, and of link with link, so as to pronounce with confidence as to the intention of



the contriver. If (like the wisdom of which Solomon writes), a creature had been with the Almighty 'in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was; when as yet he had not made the world, when he prepared the heavens, and gave his decree' to the inanimate and animated worlds as they severally arose, such a spectator might be able to understand something of the meaning of creation. But unless the supposed spectator were equal in knowledge to the Architect and Builder himself, he could affirm nothing with absolute certainty as to his designs.

Thus the teleological argument must be pronounced fallacious. It is illusory, as well as incomplete: and were we to admit its relevancy, it could afford no basis for worship, or the intellectual and moral recognition of the Object whose existence it infers. The conception of deity as a workman, laying stress upon the notion of clever contrivance and deft manipulation, whilst it subordinates moral character to skill, could never lead to reverence, or give rise to the adoration of the architect.

It must be conceded, however, that there is a subsidiary value in this, as in all the other arguments, even while their failure is most conspicuous. They prove (as Kant has shown) that if they cannot lead to the reality we are in search of, the phenomena of nature cannot *discredit* its existence. They do not turn the argument the other way, or weight the scales on the opposite side. They are merely negative, and indeed clear the ground for other and more valid modes of proof.

They are of farther use (as Kant has also shown)

in correcting our conceptions of the Divine Being, in defining and enlarging our notions of his attributes, when, from other sources, we have learned his existence. They discourage and disallow some unworthy conceptions, and enlarge the scope of others.

But now, to leave these celebrated lines of argument, which have gathered around them so much of the intellectual strife of rival philosophies, it is needful to tread warily, when we are forced to come to so decided a conclusion against them.

We do not deny that the idea of God exists in the human mind as one of its ultimate and ineradicable notions ; we only dispute the inference which ontology has deduced from its existence there. We do not deny that by regressive ascent from finite sequences we are at length constrained to rest in some causal fountain-head ; we only dispute the validity of the process by which that fountain-head is identified with the absolute source of existence, and that source of existence with a personal God. We do not deny the presence of design in nature when by that term is meant the signs or indices of mind in the relation of phenomena to phenomena as means to ends ; we only assert that these designs have no theistic value, and are intelligible only after we have discovered the existence of a supreme mind within the universe, from another and independent source. Till then, the book of nature presents us only with blank, unilluminated pages. Thereafter, it is radiant with the light of design ; full of that mystic tracery, which proclaims the presence of a living will behind it. To a mind that has attained to a knowledge or belief in God, it becomes the 'garment it thereafter sees him by;' as one might see

a pattern issuing from a loom, while the weaver was concealed, and infer some of the designs of the workman, from the characteristics of his work.

The remaining lines of proof, followed, though not worked out in the past, are the *intuitional* and the *moral*. And it is by a combination of the data from which they spring, and a readjustment of their harmonies, that the foundations of Theism can alone be securely laid. As the evidence of intuition is of greatest value, and is also most generally disesteemed, we shall take its testimony first, and examine the moral evidence of conscience afterwards.

The modern spirit is suspicious of the evidence of intuition. It is loudly proclaimed on all sides, by the teachers of positive science, that instinct is a dubious guide, liable to the accidents of chance interpretation, variously understood by various minds; that, in following it, we may be pursuing an *ignis fatuus*; that, at the best, it is only valid for the individual who may happen to feel its force; that it is not a universal endowment—as it should be if trustworthy—but is often altogether wanting; and, that it can never yield us *certainly*, because its root is a subjective feeling or conviction, which cannot be verified by external tests. These charges cannot be ignored, or lightly passed over. And for the theist merely to proclaim, as an ultimate fact, that the human soul has an intuition of God, that we are endowed with a faculty of apprehension of which the correlative Object is divine, will carry no conviction to the atheist. Suppose that he replies, 'This intuition may be valid evidence for you, but I have no such irrepressible instinct; I see no evidence in favour of innate ideas in the soul, or of a

substance underneath the phenomena of Nature, of which we can have any adequate knowledge ;' we may close the argument by simple re-assertion, and vindicate our procedure on the ground that, in the region of first principles, there can be no farther proof. We may also affirm that the instinct, being a sacred endowment, and delicate in proportion to the stupendous nature of the Object it attests, may, like every other function of the human spirit, collapse from mere disuse. But, if we are to succeed in even suggesting a doubt in the mind of an agnostic as to the accuracy of his analysis, we must verify our primary belief, and exhibit its credentials, so far as that is possible. We must show why we cannot trace its genealogy farther back, or resolve it into simpler elements ; and we must not keep its nature shrouded in darkness, but must disclose it, so far as we can. This, then, is our task.

The instinct, to which we make our final appeal is, in its first rise in the soul, crude, dim, and inarticulate. Gradually, it shapes itself into greater clearness ; aided, in the case of most men, by the myriad influences of religious thought and historical tradition, heightening and refining it when educed, but not creating it ; separating the real gold, from any spurious alloy it may have contracted. Like all our innate instincts, this one is at first infantile ; and, when it begins to assert itself, it prattles, rather than speaks coherently. We do not now raise the general question of the existence of *a priori* principles. We assume that the mind is not originally an *abrasa tabula*, but that it commences its career with sundry latent endowments, with the unconscious germs of

power in embryo. They are not explicit powers, but they are the capacities and potentialities of mental life. Their growth to maturity is most gradual ; and the difference, between their adult and their rudimentary phases, is as wide as is the interval between a mature organization, and the egg from which it springs. It is therefore no evidence against the reality, or the trustworthiness of the intuition to which we appeal, that its manifestations are not uniform ; or, that it sometimes seems absent in the abnormal states of consciousness, or among the ruder civilisations of the world. We admit that it is difficult for the uninitiated to trace any affinity between its normal and its abnormal manifestations, when it is modified by circumstances to any extent. We farther admit that while never entirely absent, it may sometimes seem to slumber, not only in stray individuals, but in a race or an era ; and, that it may be transmitted from generation to generation, in a latent state. It may hybernate ; and then awake, as from the sleep of years, arising against the will of its possessor, and refusing to be silenced. Almost any phenomenon may call it forth, and no single phenomenon can quench it. It is the spontaneous utterance of the soul, in presence of the object whose existence it attests ; and as such, it is necessarily prior to any act of reflection upon its own character, validity, or significance. Reflex thought, which is the product of experience, cannot in any case originate an intuition, or account for the result which we attribute to instinct, supposing it to be delusive. Nothing within us, from the simplest instinct to the loftiest intuition, could in any instance create the object it attests, or for which it

gropes and searches. All our ultimate principles, irreducible by analysis, simply assert and attest their own object.

The very existence of the intuition, of which we now speak, is itself a revelation, because it points to a Revealer within or behind itself. And however crude it may be in its elementary forms, it manifests itself, in its highest and purest state, at once as an act of intelligence and of faith. It may be most fitly described as a direct gaze, by the inner eye of the spirit, into a region over which mists usually brood. The great and transcendent Reality, which it apprehends, lies evermore behind the veil of phenomena. It does not see far into that reality, yet it grasps it, and recognises in it 'the open secret' of the universe. This, then, is the main characteristic of the theistic intuition. It proclaims a supreme Existence without and beyond the mind, *which it apprehends in the act of revealing itself*. It perceives, through the vistas of phenomenal sequence, as through breaks in a cloud, the glimpses of a Presence, which it can know only in part, but which it does not follow in the dark, or merely infer from its obscure and vanishing footprints. Unlike the 'necessary notion' of the Cartesians, unlike the space and time which are but subjective forms of thought, unlike the 'regressive inference' from the phenomena of the world, the conclusion it reaches is not the creation of its own subjectivity. The God of the logical understanding, whose existence is supposed to be attested by the necessary laws of the mind, is the mere projected shadow of itself. It has no more than an ideal significance. The same may be said, with some abate-

ments, of the being whose existence is inferred from the phenomena of design. The ontologist and the teleologist unconsciously draw their own portrait; and, by an effort of thought, project it outwards on the canvass of infinity. The intuitionist, on the other hand, perceives that a revelation has been made to him, descending as through a break in the cloud, which closes again. It is 'a moment seen, then gone;' for while we are always conscious of our close relation to the natural, we are less frequently aware of the presence of the supernatural.

The difference between the evidence of intuition, and the supposed warrant of the other proofs we have reviewed, is apparent. It is one thing, to create or evolve—even unconsciously—a mental image of ourselves, which we vainly attempt to magnify to infinity, and thereafter worship the image that our minds have framed; it is another, to discern for a moment, an august Presence other than the human, through a break in the clouds, which usually veil him from our eyes: and it is to the inward recognition of this self-revealing object that the theist makes appeal. What he discerns is at least not a 'form of his mind's own throwing;' while his knowledge is due, not to the penetration of the finite spirit, but to the condescension of the infinite.

We admit, however, that this intuition is *not naturally luminous*. It is the presence of the transcendent Object which it recognises, that makes it luminous.* Its light is therefore fitful. It is itself rather

* 'Were I to speak precisely,' says John Smith in his 'Select Discourses' (1660), alluding to this intuition, 'I would rather call it *ἀμύγη πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*, than, with Plutarch, *Θεοῦ νόησις*.'

an eye than a light—a passive organ, rather than an active power—and when not lit up by light strictly supra-natural, because emanating from the object it discerns, it is dull and lustreless. The varying intelligence it brings of that object, corresponds to the changing perceptions of the human eye, in a day of alternate gloom and sunlight. It is a trustful surmise which ripens gradually into a matured belief, rather than a clear perception, self-luminous from the first.

Since, however, the evidence of intuition is so generally disesteemed, it may be useful to look a little more closely into its credentials.

Our knowledge of the object which intuition discloses is, at first, and in all cases, necessarily unreflective. In the presence of the object, the mind does not double back upon itself, to scrutinise the origin, and to test the accuracy of the report that reaches it. Thus the truth which it apprehends is at first only presumptive. It must be afterwards tested by reflection, so that illusion be not mistaken for reality. What, then, are the tests of our intuitions?*

The following seem sufficient criteria of their validity and trustworthiness. 1. The persistence with which they appear, and re-appear, after experimental reflection upon them, the obstinacy with which they reassert themselves when silenced, the tenacity with which they cling to us. 2. Their

* There are sundry elements in every intuition on which we do not enlarge, since they are necessary features rather than criteria, characteristics rather than tests. Two of them may be merely stated—
1. Every intuition is ultimate, and carries its own evidence within itself: it cannot appeal to any higher witness beyond itself; and
2. The fact or facts which it proclaims, while irreducible by analysis, must be incapable of any other explanation.

historical permanence ; the confirmation of ages and of generations. The hold which they have upon the general mind of the race is the sign of some 'root of endurance,' planted firmly in the soil of human nature. If,

deep in the general heart of men,
their power survives,

we may accept them as ultimate truths ; or interpret them as phases of some deeper yet kindred truth, of which they are the popular distortion. 3. The interior harmony which they exhibit with each other, and with the rest of our psychological nature ; each intuition being in harmony with the entire circle, and with 'the whole realm of knowledge.' If any alleged intuition should come into collision with another, and disturb it, there would be good reason for suspecting the genuineness of one of them ; and in that case, the lower and less authenticated must always yield to the higher and better attested. But if the critical intellect carrying an intuition—to adopt a very crude figure—round the circle of our nature, and placing it in juxtaposition with all the others in turn, finds that no collision ensues, it may safely conclude that the witness of that intuition is true. 4. If the results of its action and influence are such as to elevate and etherealize our nature, its validity may be assumed. This by itself is no test of truth or error ; for an erroneous belief may for a time elevate the mind that holds it ; and the intellectual life, evoked by many of the erroneous theories, and exploded hypotheses of the past, has been great. But error cannot permanently educate. No illusion can survive as an elevating power over humanity ; and no alleged instinct

can sustain its claim, and vindicate its presumptive title, if it cannot stand the test we mention. A theoretic error becomes visible, when we attempt to reduce it to practice ; as a hidden crack or fissure in a vessel is seen whenever any strain is applied, or the folly of an ideal utopia is seen in the actual life of a mixed commonwealth. Many of those scientific guesses, which have done good service as provisional hypotheses, have been abandoned in the process of working them out. Similarly the flaw that lurks within an alleged intuition—if there be a flaw—will become apparent, when we try to apply it in actual life, and take it as a regulative principle in action. Thus, take the belief in the Divine existence, attested as we affirm by intuition, and apply it in the act of worship or adoration. Does that belief, which fulfils all the conditions of our previous tests,—for it appears everywhere, and clings tenaciously to man, and comes into collision with no other normal tendency of his nature, and defrauds no instinct of its due—does it tend to elevate the character of those who hold it ? The reply of history is conclusive ; the attestation of experience is abundantly clear. The power of theistic belief over human nature is such that it has frequently quickened the faculties into a more vigorous life. Its moral leverage has been vast ; while it has sharpened the esthetic sense to some of its most delicate perceptions, and has in some instances brought a new accession of intellectual power. This intuition, which men trust in the dark, gradually leads the whole nature towards the light. Its dimness is by degrees exchanged for clearness, its silence for an intelligible voice ; and, while it thus grows luminous,

and articulate, it gains in power, and our confidence in its verdict strengthens.

We have now stated what seems to us the general nature of the theistic intuition, and added one or two criteria by which all our intuitions must be tested. It remains for us however, to indicate more precisely, some of the phases which it assumes, and the channels in which it works. Though ultimate and insusceptible of analysis, it has a triple character. It manifests itself in the consciousness which the human mind has of the Infinite (an intellectual phase); in our perception of the world-soul, which is Nature's 'open, secret' revealed to the poet (an esthetic phase); and in the act of worship, through which an Object, correlative to the worshipper, is revealed in his sense of dependence (a moral and religious phase).

It is not only essential to the validity of the theistic intuition that the human mind should have a positive though imperfect knowledge of the Infinite, but this is involved in the very intuition itself. If we had no positive knowledge of the source it seeks to reach, the instinct, benumbed as by intellectual frost, and unable to rise, would be fatally paralysed; or, if it could move along over its finite area, it would wander helplessly, merely groping after its object, 'if haply it might find it.' All who deny the validity of this intuition, either limit us to a knowledge of phenomena, or, while admitting that we have a certain knowledge of finite substance, adopt the cold theory of nescience. From the earliest Greek schools, and from the earlier speculations of the Chinese mind, a powerful band of thinkers has denied to man the knowledge of aught beyond phenomena, and from Confucius to Comte the

list is an ample one. In our own day this school includes some of the clearest and subtlest minds devoted to philosophy. Comte, Lewes, Mill, Bain, Spencer, and the majority of our best scientific guides—however they differ in detail—agree in the common postulate, that the only thing we can know and intelligibly reason about, is phenomena, and the laws of these phenomena, ‘or that which doth appear.’ There is, however, a positivist ‘religion,’ which consists, now in the worship of certain selected phenomena, and again in homage paid to mystery, to the unknown and the unknowable which lies beyond the known. Comte deified man and nature, in their phenomenal aspects, without becoming pantheist; and the instinct of worship, though speculatively outlawed from his philosophy, which denies the existence of its object, asserted itself within his nature—at least in the second period of his intellectual career—and led him not only to deify humanity, but to prescribe a minute and cumbrous ritual, as puerile as it is sectarian, as inconsistent as puerile. It is true that worship is philosophically an excrescence on his system. The advanced secularist who disowns it is logically more consistent with the first principle of positivism. To adore the *grande être*, personified in woman, is as great a mimicry of worship, as to offer homage to the law of gravitation. Comte, says his acutest critic, ‘forgot that the wine of the Real Presence was poured out, and adored the empty cup.’ But we may note, in this later graft upon his earlier system, a testimony to the operation of that very intuition, which positivism disowns; its uncouth form, when distorted by an alien philosophy, being perhaps a more expressive witness to its irrepressible character.

Mr Spencer, on the other hand, bids us bow down before the unknown and unknowable power, which subsists in the universe. The highest triumph of the human spirit, according to him, is to ascertain the laws of phenomena, and then to worship the dark abyss of the inscrutable beyond them. But there is surely neither humility nor sanity in worshipping darkness, any more than there would be wisdom in erecting an altar to chaos : and the advice seems strange as coming from those, who claim to be the special teachers of clear knowledge, and comprehensible law. If we must at length erect an altar at all, we must have some knowledge of the Being to whom it is erected ; and we must have some better reason for doing so, than the blank and bland confession that we have not the smallest idea of its nature! Mr Spencer undertakes to 'reconcile' the claims of science and religion ; and he finds the rallying-point to be the recognition of mystery, into which all knowledge recedes. But if religion has any function, and a reconciliation between her and science be possible, the harmony cannot be effected by first denying the postulate from which religion starts, quietly sweeping her into the background of the inconceivable—consigning her to the realm of the unknowable—and then proclaiming that the conciliation is effected. This is to silence, or to annihilate one of the two powers, which the philosopher undertook to reconcile. It is annexation accomplished by conquest ; the cessation of strife, effected by the total destruction of one opposing force, not by an armistice, or the ratification of articles of peace. Mr Spencer does not come between combatants, who are wounding each other needlessly, and bid each put his

sword into his sheath, for they are brethren; but he turns round, and—to his own satisfaction—slays one of them, and then informs the other that the reconciliation is complete!

We must therefore ask the positivist for his warrant, on the one hand, in denying the existence of a world of substance, underneath the fleeting phenomena of being, *out of which a revelation may emerge*, apprehensible by man; and on the other, in denying to man a positive knowledge of the Infinite, as a Substance, and a Personality. We must remind him that infinite and finite, absolute and relative, substance and phenomena, are terms of a relation: while we ask him for his warrant in differentiating these terms, and proclaiming that the one set are knowable and known, the other unknown and unknowable. He arbitrarily singles out one of two factors—which together constitute a relation, and which are only known as complementary terms—and he bestows upon it a spurious honour, proclaiming that it alone is intelligible, while he relegates the other factor or term to the region of darkness. We ask him on what ground he does so? and whether the law of contrast does not render phenomena as unintelligible without substance, as substance without phenomena? Have we any right to affirm that the one is known and the other unknown, merely because the former reaches us through the five gateways of sense, and the latter through the avenue of intuition?

No wise theist ever asserted that God was phenomenally unknown. God is no phenomenon, but the noumenal essence underlying all phenomena. We have admitted and contended that a study of the laws of

Nature cannot give us direct information as to the first cause ; for a first cause could never be revealed to the senses, nor could it be an inference deduced from the data which sense supplies. The assertion, therefore, that the phenomena of nature—of which the physical sciences are the interpretation—do not reveal God, is as strongly asserted by the theist as by the positivist. They may reveal his footprints or his handiwork, but we only know whose foot or hand has left its mark on nature, when we have learned from some other source that He *is* ; while, in the employment of these terms, it must never be forgotten that we are making use of a dubious analogy.

As little, however, can the laws of nature discredit faith in a first cause, which springs from a region at once beneath, above, and beyond phenomena. The theistic doctrine is not an *inference* : it is a *postulate*. It is an axiomatic truth, affirmed on the evidence of intuition, of which the root is planted so firmly in the soil of consciousness, that no form of positivist philosophy can tear it thence. Let science, therefore, march as it will, and where it will—being hemmed in by the very laws of the universe which give rise to it, and of which it is the exposition—it cannot interfere with the theistic intuition or encroach upon it. If there is a region behind phenomena and their laws, accessible to knowledge or to philosophic faith, a region penetrable in any sense by intellectual, moral, or esthetic intuition—no conclusion gathered from the scientific survey can touch it, whether to attest or to discredit.

The fundamental doctrine of both the schools of nescience is the relativity of human knowledge ; and that doctrine, as taught by the Scottish psychologists

—and notably by Scotland's greatest metaphysician since Hume, Sir William Hamilton—has been wrested out of their hands, and turned against the theism they also advocate. Mr Spencer would exhibit them all, as 'hoist with their own petard.' It is necessary, therefore, to inquire whether this doctrine of relativity favours a theory of nescience, or warrants a counter-doctrine of the knowledge of the Infinite, or is indifferent to either.

The relativity of knowledge is a first principle in philosophy. To affirm it, however, is merely to assert that all that is known occupies a fixed relation to the knower. It is to affirm nothing as to the character or contents of his knowledge. But, as regards the objects known, we further maintain that they are apprehended, only in their differences and contrasts. We know self only in its contrast with what is not self, a particular portion of matter only in its relation to other portions, which surround and transcend it. So also, and for the same reason, with the finite and the infinite. The one is not a positive notion, and the other negative; the one clear and the other obscure. Both are equally clear, both sharply defined, so far as they are given us in relation. If the one suffers, the other suffers with it. In short, if we discharge any intellectual notion from all relation with its opposite or contrary, it ceases to be a notion at all. The finite, if we take it alone, is as inconceivable as the infinite, if we take it alone; phenomena by themselves are as incogitable as substance by itself: and the relative, as a notion cut off from the absolute which antithetically bounds it, is not more intelligible than the absolute, as an essence absolved from all relations.

Thus, the entire fabric of our knowledge being founded on contrasts, and arising out of differences, involving in its every datum another element hidden in the background, may be said to be a vast double chain of relatives mutually complementary. It looks ever in two directions, without and within, above and beneath, before and after.

We maintain, therefore, that we have a positive knowledge of the Infinite. Whosoever says, that the infinite cannot be known, contradicts himself. For he must possess a notion of it, before he can deny that he has a positive knowledge of it, before he can predicate anything regarding it. And so he says that he cannot know, what he affirms, in another fashion, that he does know. The infinite could never have come within the horizon of hypothetical knowledge, it could never have become the subject of discussion, unless it had been positively (though inadequately) known. It is thus that the infinite stands as the antithetic background of the finite. Sir William Hamilton's and Dean Mansel's doctrine of nescience is quite as suicidal as that of Mr Spencer. It implies that we have no knowledge of that, which we are nevertheless compelled to conceive, in order to know that it is unknowable. We could not compare the two notions, if one of them were unthinkable. If all knowledge is a relation, in each act of knowing, I must know both the terms related. The one term—the finite—occasions no difficulty, being admitted on both sides. But the other, which so perplexes our teachers of nescience, is necessarily vague. It is without an outline, 'without form,' but not therefore 'void' of content. It is not given us with the luminous clearness that its correlative is given; never-

theless, it is a real term, in a real relation. The moment we proceed to analyse our consciousness of the finite, we find it as the penumbra of the notion, its shadowy complement. We may never obtain more than a vague, and what we may call a moonlight view of it : nevertheless, behold it we do, apprehend it we can, realise it we must.

It is objected, however, that as human knowledge is always finite, we can never have a positive apprehension of an infinite object ; that as the subject of knowledge is necessarily finite, its object must be the same. Let us sift this objection.

I may know an object in itself, as related to me the knower ; or I may know it, in its relation to other objects, also known by me the knower. But in both instances, and in all cases, knowledge is limited by the power of the knower ; therefore, it is always finite knowledge. But it may be finite knowledge of an infinite object, incomplete knowledge of a complete object, partial knowledge of a transcendent object. The boundary or fence may be within the faculty of the knower, while the object he imperfectly grasps may not only be infinite, but be known to transcend his faculties, in the very act of conscious knowledge. For example, I may know that a line is infinite, while I have only a finite knowledge of the points along which that line extends. And similarly my knowledge of the infinite Mind while partial and incomplete, may be clear and defined. It may be definite knowledge of an indefinite object. We may have a partial knowledge, not only of a part, but of the whole. Thus, I have a partial knowledge of a circle, because I know only a few of its properties ; but, it is not to a part of the circle that my

partial knowledge extends, but to the whole circle, which I know in part. In like manner as the infinite object has no parts, it is not of a portion of its being that we possess a partial knowledge, but of the whole. We know the Infinite as we know the circle, inadequately yet directly, immediately though in part. It is dark to us by excess of light. Thus, although our knowledge of the infinite may be *vivified*, it is not really *enlarged*, by goading our thought to wider and wider imaginings, by spurring our faculties onwards, over areas of space, or intervals of time. The knowledge in question is directly elicited or revealed, while we are apprehending any finite object, as its correlative and complementary antithesis.

Again, it is said, that to know the infinite is to know the sum of all reality; and, as that would include the universe and its source together, it must necessarily include, on the one hand, the knower along with his knowledge, and on the other all the possibilities of existence. The possibility of our knowing the infinite Being as distinct from the universe is denied, since infinite existence is said to be coextensive with the whole universe of things. But that the assertion that the Infinite must necessarily exhaust existence, and contain within itself all actual being is a mere theoretic assumption. The presence of the finite does not limit the infinite. The area of the latter is not contracted by so much of the former as exists within it. For the relation of infinite to finite Existence is not similar to the relation between infinite space and a segment of it. It is true that so much of finite space is so much cut out of the whole area of infinite space—although, if the remainder be infinite, the portion removed will not

really limit it. But as our intuition of the infinite has no resemblance to our knowledge of space, we believe that the relations which their respective objects sustain have no affinity with each other. The intuition of God is a purely spiritual apprehension, informing us not of the quantity of existence in the universe, but of the quality or characteristics of the supreme Being. And to affirm, that the finite spirit of man, standing in a fixed relation to the Infinite Spirit, limits it, by virtue of that relation, is covertly to introduce a spatial concept, into a region to which it is utterly foreign, and which it has no right to enter.*

We therefore maintain, in opposition to the teachers of nescience, that a positive knowledge of the Infinite is competent to man, because involved in his very consciousness of the finite. When psychologically analysed, this intuition explains and vindicates itself.

There is another aspect, however, no less important, in which it may be regarded. To say that the infinite is wholly inscrutable by man, is to limit not man's faculty only, but the possibilities of the divine nature also. If God cannot unveil himself to man through the openings of the clouds which ordinarily conceal his presence, can his resources be illimitable, can He be the infinitely perfect? It is said, on the one hand, that an unknown Force reveals itself in the laws of nature, but cannot disclose its essence; and, on the

* Similarly with the action of the infinite and absolute cause. The creative energy of that cause is not inconsistent with its changelessness. To say so, is to introduce a quantitative notion into a sphere where quality alone is to be considered. A cause in action is the force which determines all the changes which occur in time. But the *primum mobile*, the first cause, need not be itself changed, by the forthputting of its causal power.

other, that the infinite Being reveals his handiwork, from which He permits us to infer his existence, but that He cannot reveal himself. Such assertions are either subtle instances of verbal jugglery, or manifest contradictions in terms. All revelation, of whatsoever kind, pre-supposes some knowledge of the Revealer. That knowledge may be imparted, either the moment the revelation is made, or beforehand, and from an independent source ; but no revelation could be made, were the being to whom it was addressed, wholly ignorant of the source whence it came. Is there any real difficulty in supposing that the infinite intelligence can disclose his nature, to a creature which reflects his image ; the disclosure quickening a latent power of intuition, which, thus touched from above, springs forth to meet its source and object ?

The question between the theist and the positivist is brought to its real issue when the latter is forced to recognise that the God of theism is no inference from phenomena, but, if we may so speak, a *postulate of intuition*. And hence it is so necessary frankly to concede the failure of the teleological argument from final causes, as well as of the ontological proof from the necessary notions of the intellect. We not only admit, we are zealous to affirm that by inductive science we can never rise higher than phenomena ; and hence, at the end of our search, we should be no nearer God than we were at the outset. But although we cannot reach the Divine Nature by induction, we may do so before we begin our induction, by giving the intuitions of the soul free scope to rise towards their source. And to dislodge the theist from his stronghold, the agnostic must succeed in proving that this intuition—whose root

springs from a region beneath phenomena, and which in its flight outsoars phenomena—is as baseless and unauthenticated as a dream.

Two principles, one of them metaphysical, and the other scientific, are helpful at this point in our inquiry. They are the principle of causality, and the doctrine of the correlation of forces, or the conservation of energy. We cannot discuss them at any length, but their nature, and their relation to the theistic intuition must be briefly stated.

The phenomena of nature (using that term in its widest sense) are not only a series of sequences, they are also the revelations of a mysterious Power or Force. All that we perceive by the senses, and inductively register in the sciences, is a series of phenomena, of which the laws of nature are the generalized expression, and interpretation. But every change is a revelation, not only of succession, but of causal power. No matter where we take our stand along the line of sequence mental or material, always and at every point, this conviction is flashed in upon the mind, 'there is Power hidden behind.' But we instinctively ask, 'what is this power or force determining the changes of the universe?' Is it material or spiritual? Can the force which moves the particles of matter be material? We do not perceive it by the senses, which take note only of the modified phenomena of matter. It is neither visible, nor audible, nor tangible. It is invisible. Must we not therefore believe it to be incorporeal? We cannot reach it by analysis. We conclude that it is not physical but hyper-physical, not natural but supra-natural. We have an intellectual intuition of it. It announces its presence in every

change that occurs, but it nowhere shows its face as a material entity. It is a mystic agency, endlessly revealing its existence, everywhere concealing its source. We watch its evolutions, but it escapes our scrutiny; we try to detain it, and we find that it is gone; yet we perceive it reappearing in the next thing we examine, and in the very phenomena of our search for it. The agency is manifest, but it is the Agent we wish to discover. Must it be, like the sangreal of mediæval legend, sought for in many lands, but nowhere found, by any wanderer in quest of it?

Before attempting an answer, we shall state the scientific principle referred to, which is entitled to rank as one of the greatest of modern discoveries. All the forms of force are convertible amongst themselves. They are ultimately identical, and are endlessly passing and repassing into each other; the mechanical, the chemical, the vital, are all one. 'The many' *are* 'the one;' its varying phases, its protean raiment. In short, there is but a single supreme Force, ubiquitous and plastic, the fountain of all change. It now evolves itself in heat, now masks itself in light, again reveals itself in electricity, or sleeps in the law of gravitation: one solitary pulse within Nature's vast machine, and behind the barrier of her laws. This force, thus endlessly changing, is neither diminished nor replenished; it is not added to, nor subtracted from; it is perennial, and is its own conservator. It is not by synthesis, but by analysis that its unity has been discovered. But can synthesis re-combine its manifold phases, under one regulative notion? In realising its general character, it is clear that we cannot merely discharge from our minds in turn, all the known features of particular

forces, so as to leave only a vague resultant, common to them all, yet specially identified with none. The diverse types must have an *archetype*. What is that archetype ?

It seems to us self-evident that we must seek for it, not in nature, but in man ; not in the lower plane of the cosmical forces, but in the human will, which is the root of our own personality. Comte begins with the lowermost grade of force (to wit, the mechanical), and ascends with it, bringing all the finer and more subtle forms under its sway, and interpreting the higher by the lower. We, on the contrary, begin with the highest known type, that which lies nearest ourselves, that with which we are earliest acquainted, and whence we derive our notion of force beyond ourselves ; and we descend with it, as a light to guide our footsteps amongst the lower. This is surely the correct, is indeed the only admissible philosophical procedure. If it is only through the consciousness of force within ourselves, that we have any intelligible notion of it in nature—and are thus first initiated into the idea—we must come back to the will, for an explanation of what the one force, external to us in its essence is. Our own personality supplies us with the archetype of which we are in search. We thus throw the plank across the chasm between man and nature ; we interpret the latter by the former ; and thus the correlation of forces, and the conservation of energy, become the scientific equivalent of the doctrine of philosophical theology, that one Supreme Will pervades the universe, and that in it Nature ‘lives and moves and has its being.’

If we can vindicate this procedure, and prove our

right to interpret the forces, if not the phenomena of nature, as the outcome of a living will, the energy of a nature like our own, our goal is reached. But, say the agnostics, that is a mere imagination of theology, the creation of a superstitious mind, 'transcendant audacity,' 'a form of the mind's own throwing,' just as much as the teleological explanation of nature. It has been spoken of as presumptuous, as well as fanciful, as betokening a lack of humility and philosophic caution. It has been denounced as sheer egotism to interpret nature by what we are, as a return to the Protagorean doctrine that 'man is the measure of all things.' In reply, we give only hints and suggestions; for the region is high, and the atmosphere rarefied.

In the first place, it is to be observed that we do not take one class of phenomena to explain the inner nature of another class; the phenomena of will, to explain, say those of electricity, in outward nature; for, in that case, we might as well, with just as much reason and plausibility, with just as much authority, take the latter class of phenomena to explain the former; and we should learn quite as much, that is to say, we should learn nothing at all. But we take a certain special *noumenal* force, one that is transcendant, but revealed in our innermost life and consciousness, in the will's *autocracy*, and by the help and suggestion of this known force we explain—not the phenomena of Nature, nor her laws—but the darker, the unknown noumenal Force, the pulse of nature.

In the next place, it is to be observed that as the human will, while noumenally free is phenomenally

under law, and governed most rigidly by motives ; so the force, which we interpret as the expression of personal will in nature, acts in perfect conformity to law. The laws of nature are the expression of its bondage. The minor scattered forces, which may be spoken of as the messengers and servitors of the supreme will, are no more fitful, but they are no less capricious than is the human will, in which the causal nexus is not broken, while it remains free. The supernatural reveals itself, in an orderly fashion, through the natural. Its will is expressed by law.

In the third place, so far as bridging the chasm between the two orders of phenomena, is not accomplished by the poetic intuition (to which we shall immediately refer), but by the human intellect, it seems legitimated by *analogy*. In our inductive interpretation of nature we perceive resemblances, and infer a likeness. 'Analogy is the soul of induction.' If, therefore, it be an illicit act of the reason which ventures to trace a parallel between nature and man, and interpret the former by the latter, how fares it with the foundations of human knowledge, and with the pillars of science herself? Is not all physical science the rational interpretation of nature? If we may not read the meaning of the great central Force in the light of that force which we carry in the will, how can we warrantably interpret the laws of nature in the light of that which we carry in the intellect? Are we not left in uncertainty as to the character of the entire fabric of our knowledge? The oracle is altogether dumb. If the way which seems to lead from the human will into the temple of outward nature be really a *cul-de-sac*, what warrant have


we for opening a door on the other side, and walking down the avenues of positive science, imagining that in these pathways we shall find the only key to nature? To bring the analogy into effect, let us take two instances: the force with which I discharge a projectile, and the force of gravitation. The former proceeds from the will, which is the originating power, though mechanical and physiological causes intervene. Since, therefore, similar effects have similar or resembling causes, it is a strictly analogical inference that as the effects correspond, the causes will resemble, and the essential part of the correspondence will not consist in the apparatus used (the phenomena), but in the will underlying, which is noumenal.*

In the fourth place, as the force of the will is both higher and better known than the mechanical, chemical, and vital forces of nature, we are warranted in interpreting the lower by the higher, and not in reducing the higher to the level of the lower. As we ascend in nature, from the lowest organisms to the highest types of organisation, we find that the higher is not only an advance upon the lower, but that it *includes* it; and no naturalist would describe a vertebrated animal by that which it held in common with the mollusca. That in which it differs from the types beneath it is its distinctive and descriptive feature. When, therefore, we reach man at the top of the scale, separated by a distinct endowment from the classes beneath him, yet conserving all their main

* 'I take the notion of a cause,' said Dr Thomas Reid, in a letter to Dr Gregory, 'to be derived from the power I feel in myself to produce certain effects. *In this sense* we say that the Deity is the cause of the universe.'—(Works, Hamilton's Edition, p. 77.)

characteristics in his nature—and describe him not by what he has in common with the lower animals, but by that in which he differs from them—we act on the principle of selecting the highest feature we can find, and taking it as our guide. Similarly when we are in search of the Supreme Principle of the universe, the *Causa causans*, we interpret it by the loftiest features characterizing human nature, because that nature is the highest with which we are experimentally acquainted. And we may validly throw the burden of proof upon the agnostic, and ask why the great cosmical force that rules in nature should be radically different from the volitional force which is the root of our personality? Reverting again to the force of gravitation, why should it not be the outcome, in nature, of a Will vaster than man's, resembling yet transcending it? To what does that force amount? The phenomenalist cannot arrest our inquiry by simply drawing the veil of nescience over it. He cannot slip a lid over the end of our telescope, turned skyward, by merely exclaiming 'mystery of mysteries, all is mystery.' And it seems to us that we must either divest the word gravitation of all intelligible meaning; or, while perceiving the unlikeness at a glance, we must 'invest it with a human, or *quasi-human* vitality.'

Quasi; for again, in the fifth place, this all-pervasive protean force assumes many a phase which is exceedingly unlike the operations of a personal power. In many of her moods, Nature has the countenance of the sphinx. She is sublimely silent as to her inmost essence. Cold, stern, inflexible, neutral, taciturn, apathetic—all these terms seem applicable to her at



times, as we gaze across the chasm between man and Nature. But the regulative idea, which we find in the analogy of the human will, is not to be regarded as exhaustive or exclusive of other notions which may unite with it. The personal force may at the same time be more than personal. Its highest quality becomes to us what we have called its regulative idea. Less than personal it cannot be, but more than personal it may surely be. It may contain elements within the infinite compass of its nature, different from those features of which we find the mirror in ourselves.* It is sufficient if we know that the *causa causarum*, the all-pervading life of the universe, can in any sense be described as personal, that we can speak of 'the soul of nature,' without being the dupes of a fanciful analogy, dealing merely with figure and hyperbole. It is admitted by every theist that there are myriad facets which the subtle life of nature may present to the beholder. We not only may, but we must think of it, as

He, they, one, all, within, without,
The power in darkness which we guess.

It reveals itself to us now as personal, awakening and responding to our instinct of worship, calling forth our wonder and reverence, with the hunger and the thirst of the human spirit in rising to its Source. Again it turns its cold, impassive, silent face towards us; and, as we feel its immeasurable transcendency, we are warned against the error of construing it into a

* As one who sustains a fatherly relation may be at the same time son, brother, citizen, member of a commonwealth, and member of a profession; or, as we describe a being of compound nature, such as man, who is both body and soul, by the higher term of the two.

mere exaggeration of ourselves. We thus learn on the one hand, the indefinite unlikeness between man and the supreme Spirit of the universe, and on the other their positive likeness or kindredness. We escape the prevailing error of mediævalism, and the opposite error of the modern scientific spirit. The tendency of the schoolmen was to interpret all the laws of nature in the light of *a priori* notions of the mind. They did not search laboriously for her own meaning, and wait patiently for her revelations; but distorted nature by *outré* hypotheses, fetched altogether from within. It is, however, an equal, if not a greater instance of onesidedness, to do exactly the reverse; to interpret the human spirit exclusively in the light of external nature and organic law. The apotheosis of man was at least no worse—we think it rather better—than making a fetish of nature; and explaining the sublime mysteries of the human will, by the phenomena of molecular action. We therefore maintain that, amid the many possible manifestations of the infinite Life, they may be reduced to two primary forms or aspects; the one impersonal, and the other personal. God is infinitely unlike the creature. He is also the archetype, of which we are the type. And we have less need to be philosophically warned against the possible caricature of the latter doctrine—of which the teachers of nescience remind us—than to be cautioned against the partial truth of the former, which, in isolation, may so easily drift into exaggeration and a lie.

The intellectual intuition of the Infinite, which we have endeavoured to vindicate, so far attests this correspondence; but the inspired utterance of the

Poet, in reference to the soul of nature, also bears it witness. The affinity or identity of the force within him, with the forces without, is felt by the poet, when the speculative thinker perceives it not. He cannot analyse into its constituent elements the mystic meaning of the universe, which is flashed into his soul, in moments of glowing inspiration, as the chemist analyses his earths in a crucible. But he is the

Mighty prophet, seer blest,
With whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our years to find
In darkness lost.

And he may be able to help the scientific explorer out of that abyss of mystery in which he is speculatively lost, and prevent him from erecting an altar to 'the unknown God.' While his soul, in 'a wise passiveness,' lies open to the visitations of the supernatural, he sees a vision, and he hears a voice, of which he can give no scientific explanation, but which announce to him the 'open secret' of the universe.

One of the finest analyses of intuition in all literature is that given by Lowell, the 'prevailing poet' of America. He writes—

As blind nestlings, unafraid,
Stretch up wide-mouthed to every shade,
By which their downy dream is stirred,
Taking it for the mother-bird ;
So when God's shadow, which is light,
My wakening instincts falls across,
Silent as sunbeams over moss,
In my heart's-nest half-conscious things
Stir with a helpless sense of wings,
Lift themselves up, and tremble long
With premonitions sweet of song.

The poet may thus throw the plank for us, where the psychologist and the metaphysician fail. He

sees into the life of things.

His insight—which comes and goes, in flashes marvellous but fugitive, which dart across the world and bring back this report of correspondence—illuminates every realm of nature. He tells us that it is

haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind.

He finds the whole temple of nature exquisitely filled with symbols of his own deepest thought. She is a storehouse of imagery, expressing the subtlest gradations of his feeling. Wherever he moves, he finds that the forms and the forces around him are an interpretation of what he is. They are the symbolic language of his deepest thoughts, and highest aspirations; while his innermost life again interprets them. He explains the inner world in terms of the outer, and the outward in terms of the inward. In the grand vocation of the poet, we know of nothing grander than his function of mediator, between the baffled ontologist and the man of science. He is a reconciler, who presents a common truth, which those on either side of the barrier may recognise, and the recognition of which may draw them together.

A vast and varied region of our complex nature, the æsthetic or poetic, thus comes to the aid of our theology. The great imaginative poets, in their delineations of man and nature, do not idealise; they *see*. Or, they first see, and then they idealise. Who will affirm that Wordsworth's 'inward eye,'—by the use and cultivation of which he became the greatest

of all interpreters of the symbolism of nature—in seeing visions, saw but the ghostly forms of his own imagination, and was not in contact with *real existence*? Are his ‘spiritual presences’ as unreal as the fawns and dryads of polytheistic legend? And was not even the personification of nature, in the early centuries, a cruder testimony in the same direction,—the belief in the deities of wood and hill and sea and stream, being the dumb homage of the savage mind, to a divinity in nature kindred to man? Is the poet, then, *a seer*,* or only the elaborator of fancies?—the weaver of ideal shapes, or the discernor of real existence? He tells us that nature is a luminous veil, behind which visions are to be seen, and voices heard; that sometimes, in a moment, he comes upon the footprints of the supernatural; and that, in such moments, he is in contact with a reality, which he calls ‘the soul of the world.’ Why should he call it a soul, if he has no intuition of its analogy, and correspondence with his own nature?—and why should he *not* call it a soul if he perceives its kindredness to himself? What though he speaks continually in the plural, and tells us of the myriad ‘presences;’ as the scientific explorer speaks of manifold ‘forces?’ What though he lapses now into a semi-polytheist, and again into a quasi-pantheistic, interpretation of nature? It is but the sign of a weight of inspiration too vast for utterance at one time, in one form. It indicates that his feeling of the

* We use this word according to its ancient meaning. It describes the way in which the inspired soul of a prophet or a poet ‘became possessed of his truths,’ in distinction from his other function as an ‘utterer of truths.’ And we refer only to those poets who, as ‘utterers of truth,’ have spoken of the spiritual presences of nature, amongst whom, Wordsworth is chief.

central life has broken up into diversity ; that nature's great soul—

The Presence that disturbs him with the joy
Of elevated thoughts—

cannot disclose itself at once, as all-in-all and all inclusive, within the boundaries of the finite mind. In its very wealth, it reveals itself as manifold. But, as the poet and the philosopher may combine the manifold, in the unity of their own mind, why may they not do so in the unity of the Object, revealing itself to them ?

It is to be observed, however, that the object which the poet's insight attests and reveals, is not phenomenal, but substantial. Hence no question arises as to its origin. It is only that which enters on the theatre of phenomenal existence, that demands a further explanation. The entrance and the exit of phenomena are explained, when we refer them to the substance out of which they have emerged, and to which they return. But we do not ask for the origin of substance, any more than for the origin of space, time, or number. Substance has no origin, being eternal.

There is still another branch of the theistic evidence from intuition. It arises out of the instinct of worship, which has many separate phases. It is seen in the mere uprise of the soul, spontaneously doing homage to a Higher-than-itself ; in the sense of dependence, felt by all men who ' know themselves ; ' in the need which the worshipper feels of approaching One who is higher and holier than himself, and in whom all perfection resides, one who is recognisable by him, and is interested in his state ; in the workings of the

filial instinct seeking its source, and, as St Augustine said, 'restless till it rests in Thee;' in the suffrage of the heart, rising amid the miseries of its lot, and even against the surmises of the intellect, to the 'Rock that is higher than it;' in the soul's aspirations; in its thirst for the ideal, while it feels the necessity of an absolute centre, or ultimate standard of truth, beauty, and goodness; and even, finally, in the passionate longings of the mystic to reach an utterly transcendent good. All these things bear witness to an *instinct*, working often in the dark, but always seeking its Source. They are almost universal, and they are certainly ineradicable. They show how deeply the roots of theism are planted in the soil of the moral consciousness. We cannot, however, pursue these several lines of proof in detail. They form a fitting link of connection with the more strictly ethical evidence, on which we must add a few paragraphs.

The Kantian argument is more intricate, and is much less satisfactory than the common evidence, from the phenomena of conscience itself. It is founded on the moral law, with its 'categorical imperative,' asserting that certain actions are right and others wrong, in a world in which the right is often defrauded of its legitimate awards, and the wrong is temporarily successful. This, however, says Kant, points to a future, in which the irregularity will be redressed, and *therefore* to a supreme Moral Power, able to effect it. The argument is altogether inferential. It is circuitous; its conclusion being, in a sense, an appendix to the doctrine of immortality; and it has only a secondary connection with the data of the moral law itself. But the phenomena of conscience

afford the data of theism directly. We do not raise the question of the nature or the origin of the moral faculty. We assume its existence, as an *a priori* principle, carrying with it, not a contingent, but an absolute and unconditional authority. This moral imperative within us, however, is the index of another power, of a higher personality whence it emanates, and of whose character it is the expression. The law carries in its heart, or centre, the evidence of a moral law-giver; his existence not being an inference *from*, but a postulate *of* this law. It is given with the direct and antithetic clearness, with which the infinite is given as the correlative of the finite; and the ascent from the law, to the supreme Legislator, is not greater than is the ascent from space and time, revealed in limited areas and intervals, to immensity and eternity. The two data are the terms of a relation. Thus we do not rise to the Divine Existence by any 'regressive inference,' as the Kantian argument reaches it; we find God *in* conscience. Moral analysis reveals the presence of another personality within, and yet above our own; and, if we reject this implicate, folded within the very idea of conscience, it ceases to be authoritative; and, divested of all ethical significance, it sinks to the level of expediency.

Thus, the moral part of our nature rests upon the background of another, and a divine personality. Let us analyse the notion of duty, the idea of obligation contained in the word '*ought*.' If it resolves itself into this, 'it is expedient to act in a certain manner, because, if we do not, we injure the balance of our faculties, promote a schism amongst the several powers, and put the machinery of human nature out of work-

ing gear : ' then it does not point to one behind it, any more than the phenomenal sequences and designs in nature point in that direction. But, if we ' ought, *simply because we ought,*' i.e., because the law which we find within us (but did not produce) controls us, haunts us, and claims supremacy over us, then we find in such a fact, the revelation of One, from whom the law has emanated. As Fenelon says, in reference to the idea of the infinite, breathing the spirit of St Augustine—

' Where have I obtained this idea, which is so much above me, which infinitely surpasses me, which astonishes me, which makes me disappear in my own eyes, which renders the infinite present to me. It is in me ; it is more than myself. It seems to me everything, and myself nothing. I can neither efface, obscure, diminish, nor contradict it. It is in me ; I have not put it there, I have found it there : and I have found it there only because it was already there before I sought it. It remains there invariable, even if I do not think of it, when I think of something else. I find it wherever I seek it, and it often presents itself when I am not seeking it. It does not depend upon me. I depend upon it.' *

Similarly Newman writes of conscience—

' A voice within forbids, and summons us to refrain ;
And if we bid it to be silent, it yet is not still : it is not in
our control,
It acts without our order, without our asking, against our will.
It is *in* us, it belongs to us, but it is not *of* us : it is *above* us.
It is moral, it is intelligent, it is not *we*, nor at our bidding ;
It pervades mankind, as one life pervades the trees.' †

Whence then comes this law which is ' in us, yet not of us, but above us,' which we did not create, and which circumstances do not alter, though they modify

* De l'Existence de Dieu. Part II. ch. i. s. 29.

† Theism, pp. 13, 14.

its action? It is not the moral echo within, of a Voice louder and vaster without—a voice which legislates, and in its sanctity commands, issuing imperial edicts for the entire universe of moral agency? In one sense conscience is the viceroy, or representative of a higher Power; in another, it is the voice of one crying in the wildernesses of the human spirit, ‘Prepare ye the way for the Law.’ It ever speaks ‘as one having authority;’ and yet its central characteristic (as pointed out by a living teacher) is not that the conscience *has* authority, but that it is ‘the consciousness of authority.’ It testifies to another: the implanted instinct bearing witness to its Implanter; and through the hints and intimations of this master-faculty, thus throned amidst the other powers, we are able to ascend intuitively and directly to God. We are ‘constituted to transcend ourselves;’ and conscience becomes a ladder by which we mount to the supernatural, as well as the voice, which speaks to us of God. Thus, to quote the language of one of the Cambridge Platonists of the 17th century (Dr John Smith)—

‘As Plotinus teaches us, “he who reflects upon himself reflects upon his own *original*,” God has so copied forth himself into the whole life and energy of man’s soul as that the character of the divinity may be most easily seen and read of all within themselves. And whenever we look upon our souls in a right manner we shall find a *Urim* and a *Thummim* there; and though the whole fabric of this visible universe be whispering out the notion of a Deity, yet we cannot understand it without *this interpreter within*.’

THE SUMMUM BONUM.

(*The North British Review*, March 1869.)

‘WHAT is the chief end of man?’ is a question with which Scotland has been familiar for two centuries. In its terse simplicity it states one of the ultimate questions in Philosophy. Its theoretical solution would be the answer to a fundamental problem in Ethics; its practical realization would be the ideal of a perfect life. In one form or other it occurs to all men in whom the reflective life has dawned, and who look beneath the surface of human action, to discover its underlying root and ultimate purpose. It arises out of the instinctive craving for unity in our life, which is spontaneous and ineradicable. We are not satisfied by studying the phenomena of human nature as a miscellaneous mass of mere detail; but we desire to know the relation of the parts to the whole, and the connexion of the whole with its parts.

The question thus raised has been discussed in every philosophical school. It is as old as the meditations of the seers in Palestine and the remoter East. We find it treated with marvellous subtlety and great breadth of insight by the more noticeable of the Greek thinkers. Every philosopher of mark in modern times has rediscussed it, and in his own way deepened the current of research, or added a contribution to our knowledge of the problem; while it

remains as fresh and full of interest as if the race had just awakened from the sleep of centuries, to ponder it for the first time. Being thus one of the problems of the *philosophia perennis*, its solution must vary with the character of the great systems, and be essentially modified by the prevailing type of each. —

It is closely related to two other cardinal questions in philosophy, ‘whence are we?’ and ‘whither do we tend?’—what is our origin? and what our destination?—questions which have nursed the speculative passion, and aroused the wondering curiosity of men in all ages. But the third great inquiry, ‘What is the ultimate end, or final purpose of our life, what its present ideal?’ is quite as fundamental as the others, and its solution is much more urgent.

It may not be possible to give an altogether satisfactory answer to any one of these questions without partially answering the other two, since the three problems intersect each other, and their solutions are finely interlaced. The conclusions of Speculative Philosophy (culminating in Theology) and those of Ethics are ultimately based upon the data which human nature supplies; and, as human nature is an organic whole, the results we arrive at in one department of inquiry must necessarily modify our view of all the others. Thus, if we have no light as to our origin and destination beyond that which the law of evolution, and the sequences of physical nature supply, our ideal of conduct will be proportionately lowered. We could scarcely find a motive for the culture of our powers that would not be crippled in its action, by

the obscurity of the source whence we have arisen, and the dreariness of the goal to which we tend. And it is historically certain that those systems which have denied to man all knowledge, of his source or of his destiny, have lowered his ideal of culture.

The discussion of every great philosophical question however, must be untrammelled by the answer which other problems yield us, or even by the data which the several sciences supply; and we propose now to examine the third of the correlated questions referred to, partly in the light of a recent discussion by one of the ablest of living critics, and partly as a theme of permanent philosophic interest, unaffected by the passing controversies of our age.

The late occupant of the chair of Poetry at Oxford (himself a poet and a thinker of no mean rank) has recently brought the question of culture before the British mind, with singular freshness and emphasis. We shall not, in the first instance, follow Mr Arnold into those bypaths of subtle criticism, where he ranges with so free a step, and applies his doctrine to the prevailing tendencies of England with rare discriminative power. We shall rather approach the group of questions raised by him, through a brief discussion of the philosophical problem, 'What is the chief end of human existence—the ideal of a perfect life?'

We must distinguish, however, at the outset, between the theoretic ideal, as an object of thought and contemplation, and its practical realization in human life. The ideal always stands contrasted with the actual as that to which no one can absolutely attain, however he may succeed in his approach to it. There

are conditions in which the image of culture is inevitably bounded, obstacles which resist its progress and impede its freedom, which are irremovable within the limits of human life. These do not concern us at present. We propose, in the first instance, to discuss the idea of culture by endeavouring to answer the question, 'To what would the most perfect education of the faculties amount, supposing all hindrances to that education withdrawn?' Having answered this question, we shall be in a position to consider how the hindrances which prevent its realization may be most successfully overcome.

What, then, is the relation in which human culture, with a view to human perfection, stands to the supreme end of life, as an ideal aim? Our answer may be stated generally thus:—That when the term is broadened and deepened in its meaning far beyond its customary limitation, culture, prosecuted with a view to the entire perfection of our nature, is the not absolute and untransferable end of human existence. This is our thesis. We proceed to the proof of it.

It may conduce to precision of statement if we distinguish between the two principal terms made use of in the proposition with which we thus set out. The former term 'culture,' we regard as the means of attaining the latter, 'perfection': this denoting the ripe result, when all the human faculties act together, vigorously and harmoniously; that denoting the process of education, by which the faculties are trained to reach their end in concord. The distinction, however, is fundamentally empirical, inasmuch as the resulting perfection, however harmonious and complete, can never be regarded as final. Its supreme value consists

in the facilities it affords for further advance. The stages of perfection reached, become in turn, and necessarily, but 'the stepping-stones of their dead selves,' on which men rise to 'higher things.' In other words, the states of human nature to which the terms culture and perfection are applicable, are at once both ends and means. Looked at on one side, as possessed of a certain inherent value, they are ends; surveyed on the other, they are but means, as the conditions of still higher ends.

But the determination of the final end of human existence must depend essentially upon the answer which we give to the prior question, 'What are the essentials of human nature? What are the fundamental characteristics of man, as a being distinct from the other existences, that surround him in the universe?' Driven thus backwards to consciousness,—our final court of appeal in every philosophical question,—we discern (in a way we need not tarry to explain) the ultimate fact of our personality, and, along with this, as a correlated fact, our personal freedom. We assume, we take for granted in this discussion, our free human personality, and along with it the possession of certain faculties (intellectual, moral, religious, esthetic, social). Now, if these faculties cannot be said to have a defined existence till their activity is called forth,—if for man they are practically real, only in so far as by man they are consciously realised; and if they are consciously realised, only in so far as they are cultivated,—in that case it is plain that the very end of the possession is *use*; that the activity of the faculties is the supreme end of their existence. The fullest, freest, least impeded, and best balanced energy amongst the several

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powers of our nature thus becomes that nature's end.


Whether an ulterior end is or is not subverted by this proximate one is a further question which we shall presently discuss. But in so far as man is to be regarded as a centre of personality, and as reaching his manhood only through the concurrent action of his powers, it is clear that he fulfils the end of his being, is in short *truly man*, only in so far as he fulfils the law of catholic or eclectic culture. We thus view man as a personal and free agent, whose nature is made up of certain innate powers, and whose perfection consists in their harmonious action and reaction. The list or circle of the faculties is the same in every rational creature. However stunted, there is none absolutely wanting in any human being. Even in the idiot and the insane (these malformations of humanity), the missing power is merely suppressed. It is buried under a bad organization, crushed by a weak physique. The supreme and final end of every human life is therefore the perfection of each faculty in detail, and the harmony of all in unison.

Though no analogy can adequately illustrate an ultimate truth, the following symbol may be of slight use. Imagine an inverted cone, with its apex slightly blunted, but rising on all sides upwards to infinity. Round the narrow circle, forming the base, cluster the normal infant energies of human nature. From the apex there is an expansion upwards; but with the rise perpendicular, there is also an expanse horizontal; and they are equally indefinite and limitless. The human faculties, in their progress from infancy to manhood, rise as do the sides of the graduated cone;

but, as they gain in height, they expand at an equal ratio, in the widening circles of breadth. Progress intellectual, moral, esthetic, religious, may be measured by the places gained by the agents who toil on the sides and circles of the cone. The base represents that zero of ignorance whence we set out; the positions gained, and the prospects beheld, are the stages and the partial lights of knowledge. The lines and circles, out-reaching to the surrounding infinite, and lost above and around in the clouds, symbolize that veil of mystery which encircles our last truths, as it enveloped the first, and which girdles our faculties when they have reached their loftiest culture, as it wrapped them round in their embryo development. The progress from absolute ignorance to partial science, ending in a return to relative ignorance—the sum of our intellectual destiny, and a favourite theme of philosophic men—is thus faintly symbolized in the inverted cone. However inadequate the illustration, it may at least represent a circle of faculties advancing in harmony, each one being supposed to be linked to the first circle which formed the inverted apex. But as analogy casts but a pale and lunar light upon a problem which touches the region of transcendent truth, we lay it aside; and content ourselves with announcing once more, as a first principle of ethical doctrine, that man's chief end is to cultivate his faculties; that the great desideratum is how to secure the deepest, widest, and intensest life; and that all the education he receives is only a system of means by which this is more or less perfectly or imperfectly secured.

We may remember, however, that in that religious

catechism with which Scotland is so familiar, 'man's chief end' is defined as 'to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever;' and no one who is at once thoughtful and reverent will quarrel with the definition. It states a great truth in brief compass. But it does not present the entire range of the truth. The aim of the compilers of that manual of instruction was not to write a series of philosophical aphorisms, but to arrange a practical digest of religious belief. And the philosophic student of the ultimate ends of human action may learn from the definition of the divines at Westminster, while he is in search of other aspects of the question with which they were unfamiliar. Let us take for granted that the chief end of the creature is to glorify the Creator; the further question immediately arises—How is he to do it? By what method is he to proceed to the execution of the stupendous task? If our answer is to be more than a barren formula—if it is to be a fruitful maxim of life and conduct—we must know how to translate the first of the two propositions from indefiniteness into clearness. How is man to proceed, that he may succeed, in this high and seemingly transcendent effort to glorify the Infinite? If we answer that, by the cultivation and increase of all the powers of his nature, to the utmost possible intensity, and in the greatest possible harmony, he is able to do so; we may perhaps find that the formula is translated for us from the abstract to the concrete. It is by the use of all our powers, by becoming the very best and highest that we can become, by neglecting no part of our natures, but developing to the uttermost all the faculties with which we are endowed, that our humanity can alone



grow up, 'compacted by that which every joint supplieth.' It may be that in this process of assiduous culture and effort, man is but the agent of the will of One higher than himself, whose perfection he is instrumentally revealing. He may be achieving an end, and furthering a plan, which reaches immeasurably beyond himself; but, as he is also an end to himself, personal perfection should be no less a conscious aim of his life. We do not say that he may concentrate attention upon himself, and pursue his culture in isolation from his fellows; but we do say that the perfection of his nature is at once a definite end of his labour, and the only means by which he can glorify the Author of his being. 'It is manifest,' says Sir William Hamilton, 'that man, in so far as he is a mean for the glory of God, must be an end unto himself, for it is only in the accomplishment of his own perfection that as a creature he can manifest the glory of his Creator. Though, therefore, man by relation to God be but a mean, *for that very reason*, in relation to all else, he is an end.' The apparent paradox is thus strictly true, that man is an end to himself, although that end is not a selfish or utilitarian one; and, the self-regarding with the self-forgetting instincts are the two forces (centripetal and centrifugal) which, working in union—a union most perfect when it has become so natural as to be unconscious—cause his nature to revolve in harmony around the central sun of the universe.

When, now, we turn to the educational schemes of so-called 'practical men,' we find that they nearly all ignore the foregoing principle. The fundamental flaw which vitiates their systems (whether they ex-


plicitly avow it, or only tacitly hold it) is the ignoble concession that man may renounce his prerogative as an *end*, and become mainly or merely a professional *mean*. The practical educationist abhors an ideal, as nature was said of old to abhor a vacuum; and his dislike to an 'ideal' explains the fact that he cannot comprehend how a man can be an end to himself. He has no appreciation of culture which does not promise a utilitarian return; and, to secure some obvious practical advantage, certain educational appliances are set agoing to obtain it, in the shortest possible time, and with the least possible cost. For example, it is desirable to know the facts of history, and the laws of social statics, because these bear practically upon modern political progress. It is wise to wrest her secrets from Nature, for these can be made available in industrial production, and thus increase the 'well-being' of man. Science is a fruitful branch of education, because science has joined hands with utility. But the ideal of a many-sided culture, considered as an end in itself, and not as a means to any end lower than itself,—a state in which one rests in the insight and intellectual harmony which culture brings him,—is regarded by our practical educationists as at once unsubstantial, and incapable of realization. It is also represented as inconsistent with the position which men occupy in a world of manifold competition, and highly complex civilisation, with enormous and increasing subdivision of labour.

We admit that to succeed in any one pathway of culture, a man must willingly renounce much that lies along its margin, and invites him on either side. There must be distinct concentration of faculty upon

a special object to effect a special end. The brevity of life, the division of labour, the complexity of civilisation, and the many new and recondite paths of research that are being continually opened up—all these necessitate a sacrifice of some things for the attainment of others; and while, without division of labour no culture would be possible, with that division comes inevitably *the narrowing influence of the exercise of a special faculty*. As our doctrine is meant to apply not merely to the few who have the leisure, and the means for the prosecution of the highest culture, but also to the many who have them not, we admit that most men must concentrate themselves with a piercing intensity of aim on one field of action. There must be a point towards which their main efforts tend, and around which their chief sympathies gravitate. Without such precision of aim, even splendid powers would be lost; and the practical man must always work by concentration and limitation. At the same time, the general cultivation of the other powers, on every possible occasion, should not have the effect of weakening the special power, which is more exclusively developed. General education, with its wide and varied knowledge, while it gives a larger mental horizon, and broadens the range of sympathy, should never paralyse special effort in a chosen sphere.

But the position assumed by the advocates of special and practical, as opposed to general and catholic culture, is usually tainted by a false spirit of utilitarianism. Whether in its grosser or more refined form, it estimates the value of culture, in the department it selects, by the use to be made of it, by the ends it may subserve. It thus degrades it to the

position of an instrumental means. It reverses the true position of 'means' and 'ends' respectively. Instead of regarding the universe as a storehouse of educational forces,—and man himself as greater than anything that educates him,—instead of interpreting the whole arrangements of life as a complex apparatus by which the human powers may be developed to their noblest height, it turns these powers into a number of instruments for the conquest of Nature, and the accumulation of results! But to estimate the worth of any department of culture by the extent to which it is available for professional use, is as complete a degradation of it, as it would be to measure the excellence of knowledge by its market value in the world. It turns man into an ignoble utilitarian machine, an instrument for the attainment of trivial ends, relative to this brief time-life. We maintain, on the contrary, that professional success, however brilliant, if unidealized by this wide view of human culture, and sympathy with man's varied nature and possibilities, is of slightly higher value than mere skill in a handicraft. Therefore, to train and to invigorate the entire circle of the powers; to form not so much the accomplished professional man, the thinker, or the artist, or the man of science, or the statesman; but to form a harmonious human being, with all his faculties educated to the fullest self-government, self-possession, repose, refinement, and activity, is the true goal of human endeavour. To secure this inward ripening and outward expansion of life, the culture of thought and feeling, of imagination and sympathy, of the power of reflection and the power of action, in a harmonious many-sidedness, is a clearly intelligible



end of human existence. To secure it is unquestionably a nobler ambition than to convert one's-self into a passive means for the attainment of any result connected with our earthly life.

But as this doctrine of culture has been rashly stigmatised as an appeal to the selfish principle in human nature, we must observe the real breadth of the area it covers. It is not separative and exclusive, but intensely social. One large section of our complex humanity, of which the powers must be evoked, is that which unites us with our fellowmen. It is at the peril of our own highest culture if we neglect to carry others with us to the best of our ability. Effort to educate and raise the tone of society, to redress all the wrongs we see and can redress, to relieve misery, to promote the freedom and happiness of our fellows, and the moral health of the community in which we live, —all these are parts of culture, as we understand the term. It is true that the doctrine which we teach tends to concentrate thought and attention in the first instance on the individual. He strives after the realisation of the ideal in himself; but he finds that its realisation is impossible, if he does not interest himself profoundly and unselfishly in the good of his fellowmen. Thus, as he advances, he creates around himself an altered world. In all culture we must consider our neighbours along with ourselves; only it is necessary that our consideration be enlightened, and that our deeds be wise,—not the crude and hasty efforts of our own idiosyncrasy, but broad, large-minded, and humane. If the actions which tend outwards from self to reach and help our fellows are to prove either stable or productive, they must be based on wisdom, they must

spring from a cultivated state of the soul. But the ideal of culture includes within it the self-forgetting, as certainly as it embraces the self-regarding instincts. We dwarf our natures by the neglect of self-sacrifice, as much as by despising any section of knowledge. Thus, healthful culture is not the mere expansion of the individual, who, intent upon his own perfection, feels 'his isolation grow defined.' Such culture narrows the soul in one direction while it widens it in another; and the human ties which connect man with man, which unite one thinker with another, the speculative philosopher with the poet, the poet with the man of science, the scientific labourer with the industrial worker, and so forth, must be recognised by each labourer, while he pursues his course along his own selected pathway.

One of the best criteria of a well-educated mind is the extent of its sympathy with lines of study and departments of research, with which it has a very limited acquaintance, and over which it may have no expectation of ever ranging freely. An ungrudged recognition of their value, as probably equal to that which the individual is pursuing, and a power of appreciating their results—while the processes by which these results have been reached are not known—is as rare, as it is fruitful, to the mind that has attained to it. But surely it is possible to glance over the broad areas, or down the long avenues of culture, which we can never hope ourselves to traverse step by step, without falling into the snare of the dilettante. We may sympathise with much, that we cannot personally pursue; and appreciate many things, which we have neither the leisure, nor the genius to explore.

The advocates of special and utilitarian, as distinguished from a harmonious and many-sided education, aim at completeness in one special direction. It is in this that their strength lies: in their clear mastery of what they do achieve. And in so far as their practice tends to thoroughness, as opposed to shallow or surface culture, it is a useful protest against dilettantism. Concentration of effort to one path, however, usually begets a bias in favour of it so strong, that it absorbs the whole energy of the individual, and blinds his eye to the value of what lies on either side. Thus, many of the advocates of scientific culture, not content with magnifying the importance of a wide knowledge of the phenomena and laws of nature, proceed to depreciate literary culture; or the partisans of classical study similarly ignore the claims of physical science. The speculative thinker, the poet, the historian, the mathematician, the artist, the musician, severally exalt their own department, to the disparagement of other, and (as they think), outlying provinces. Each magnifies his own department, but usually sacrifices his completeness to his specialty. It is so far essential that he should do so; for the prosecution of culture, no less than the business of life, is regulated by the division of labour. But when the partisan of one department would urge others to follow him, and to desert the ancient pathways, with which he is unfamiliar, or which he has no genius to pursue, he violates a fundamental rule of culture, and a primary law of progress. Thus some reformers would remove from the old curriculum of University study, or shut up within the narrowest possible limits, sections of culture most valuable to the race, and which

have evoked its noblest powers, because to themselves they are of little worth, and possess but a slight significance. Like all iconoclasts, they betray a certain rudeness towards unfamiliar phases of knowledge and of human interest, not far removed from the conceit which vaunts its little light, though it be but 'the twinkling of a taper,' as the most important light for future ages.

To possess a soul at once intense and many-sided, free in thought, flexile in sympathy, yet energetic in action; ready to receive and to retain new impressions, yet swift in its executive function which carries these into practice; willing to see as many sides of every question as the question possesses for finite minds, yet not paralysed by the multitude of competing views, and not indifferent to a decision because a fragment of truth may lie in every one of these; not languid in action, from the width of the intellectual prospect it surveys—such is the ideal of an educated life. It involves the possession of the amplest knowledge that is possible, in alliance with the largest feeling; the widest range of sympathy, in alliance with the most vigorous and energetic action; every healthy human tendency finding freest scope for its exercise, every desire that is legitimate getting satisfaction, every one that is illegitimate being controlled, the defective called into power, those in excess restrained;—in other words, the highest human culture is *the greatest possible health of the whole man*. All our powers must be braced by exercise, if they are to be healthy; while the activity of each is at once a stimulus and a check to the rest. From the very constitution of human nature, every power must be curbed to make room for the action of

the others ; and self-denial, instead of being a special duty to be exercised towards a special portion of our nature under a religious sanction, *is a universal necessity of our human life*, if we are to approach towards the ideal of health.

Health is maintained only through the control of each of our powers by the joint action of all the rest. A curb must be laid upon certain appetites, if a human being is to be even a healthy animal. Restraint must be laid upon his animal nature if he is to be a healthy human being, and his intellectual nature unstarved. But he must deny himself the exclusive pursuit of knowledge, as much as the unrestrained pursuit of mere physical perfection. He must check the outflow of his feelings by his reason ; his moral perfection must go hand in hand with the culture of his imagination ; his religious aspirations must have free course to ascend above the horizon of the present, but they must rise in union with his reason, and in harmony with his understanding. We do not mean that he is to turn to one part of his nature for guidance in the education of another ; but he is to allow no part to encroach upon the rights of another ; and that involves self-restraint in the culture of all. Thus our doctrine is opposed to the unbridled individualism of modern culture. It opposes all forms of anarchic liberty, in the prosecution of a special end, as 'the one thing needful' for man ; quite as much as it opposes a general torpor of thought, or lazy acquiescence in one set of ideas or one system of opinions.

It will thus be seen that religious culture is but a part of the universal completeness, which is the ideal of man's destiny. We assume it as an axiom which

no thoughtful man can gainsay, that *exclusive* absorption in religious enterprise, or devotion to religious thought and contemplation, is not the absolute end of a human being's existence. It is in these things that human nature culminates. Within the area of religion, we find the sphere for the highest exercise of our highest faculties. But if the call to be devout were a call to subordinate our whole nature to the religious faculty, to secure for that not only a dominant and regulative, but an exclusive authority over us, then the sooner we adopted the rules of asceticism the better, the sooner that the ideal of the mediæval church were made real on our earth the better. We may not confound the perfection of our religious being, with the perfection of our whole nature. Many a man is tolerably well disciplined as a religious being, who is signally defective as a thinker, as a student of nature, and of humanity, or as a member of society. His mind may never have received the genial influences of Nature ; or, it may be so cabined and confined to the narrow path of some *outré* experience, that it may shrink sensitively from exposure to the bracing air of the world of thought. His feelings may be austere, his sympathies with his fellow-men soured and contorted, his very patriotism twisted, all through his exclusive absorption in what he deems religious culture. But ultimately his religion itself will suffer. It will pay the penalty of its own ambition. Desirous to absorb the whole nature, it may ultimately lose its rightful hold of a part. Religious progress may be pursued in such a fashion as to take all grace and loveliness out of it, and to turn it into the grim and forbidding image of a superstition. Nay, it is possible, in an unhealthy and overstrained sanctimony

which is not religion, to neglect the common duties of life, on the plea that all the energies of the soul are engrossed with devotion. In all ages, the *merely* 'religious world' has tended to narrowness, by contracting the basis from which devotion springs. 'Mere spirituality,' says one of our most thoughtful writers, 'seems to exhaust the soil that rears it, so that Christianity must always gain much from extraneous sources.'

On the other hand, a culture which ignores religion,—which is so devoted to the perfecting of the other powers that the religious instincts lie untouched,—is equally biassed, defective, and narrow. The advocates of such culture forget that our powers must culminate in worship, before they bear their noblest fruit. Wordsworth used to say that the man who despised anything in Nature had 'faculties within, which he had never used.' The same may be said of those who omit the instinct of worship from their inventory of the powers of the soul. The speculative thinker, the poet, the artist, or student of science, who are so absorbed in their special pursuit, that they do not allow the religious instinct to assert itself, or do not give it scope for its fullest development, are *to that extent defective as men*, however perfect as thinkers, poets, artists, or men of science they may be. They practically allow a portion of their nature (and that the noblest) to lie unused within them; and a singular nemesis attends the neglect. The very faculty in course of time vanishes. The repressed instinct ceases to assert itself. They become accustomed to the want, and can dispense with the action of the faculty; and ultimately they may traduce their very

nature, by denying the existence of that to which they were at first indifferent, the culture of which they found irksome, and finally ignored.

We may thus explain the attitude assumed by some of the teachers of modern science towards religion. They have been so absorbed in the study of nature, so possessed by the scientific passion, that they have quietly ignored the grander sphere of religious feeling. The instincts, which would naturally have asserted themselves, have gradually collapsed. Neglected, they have finally ceased to appeal; being crushed out by mere disuse and neglect. We place in the same category the biassed advocate of logical culture, whose ideal Wordsworth happily satirised, as

A reasoning self-sufficient thing,
An intellectual all-in-all.

The merely knowing man is in reality a half-educated man, *because* he is so exclusively knowing. He cannot fail to be so, if he ignores the feelings, which either underlie, or are intertwined with all our knowledge; and, in so doing, he not only mutilates his nature, but attenuates his very intellect. No intellectual conclusion is ever reached, or, if reached, is of much value, without the co-operation of those instincts and emotions which intertwine their roots with all our knowledge. Thus the logical mind, always clear and exact, but sharpened to a thin point, may tunnel its way into the heart of problems; but it works like the mole, underground. It fails in vision, because it is destitute of feeling, which is so often the key to knowledge. And so, those systems of the universe built up by the logical mind alone, present us with the

mere skeleton, or frame-work of knowledge. They are not clothed with flesh, or animated with the blood of humanity ; while the cloistered students who elaborate them, cut off from the complex and many-coloured streams of emotion, are generally as imperfect men, as their systems are defective structures.

To return to the relation in which religious culture stands to human perfection ; instead of regarding the religious as one of the faculties, we may broaden the meaning of the word ' religion,' and include within it the harmony of the whole individual life, as re-united to its Source. It is a fair question whether this extension of the meaning of the word is not at once a more accurate interpretation of it, and a better safeguard both for religion and for culture. Religious culture would thus describe the uprise of all the powers of human nature, and their homage in the course of their education into life and power. In either case, however, we must guard against identifying a narrow range of special thought and feeling which we choose to call ' religion,' with the true destination of man, the end which all men ought exclusively to aim at.

In advocating this many-sided culture, we do not forget that the majority of men must limit themselves to a very narrow sphere of effort, and that the result to which they attain cannot but be exceedingly partial in the present life. This fact, however, does not invalidate the general axiom that the primary aim of every life, fettered as it must be by circumstance, should be to develope to the very utmost limit of which it is capable. That remains the ideal, however much its realisation is hindered by the accidents of our pre-

sent lot. And the injury that would otherwise accrue to one who is 'in narrowest working shut,' may be indefinitely lessened, if he admits that his nature *ought* to be trained to the very highest energy and harmony of which it is capable; and if he refuses to acquiesce, with bland contentment or dull apathy, in the limits of inevitable fate. It is the recognition of the ideal, we might almost say its worship, that is the grand condition of human progress.

Three results will follow, from the admission of what we have now advanced. One of these is the attainment of a large-minded catholicity. This arises directly and inevitably. No man may scorn another's pathway to perfection, however different from his own, if it be a real track, leading to the common goal. As the original balance of the powers is different in each man's life, the order in which his powers will awake to action must vary, and the harmony that results will vary also. As every class in society has something to gain from contact with every other class—as from each stratum in the great social fabric sympathetic movements may pass and repass endlessly—so the most highly cultivated in one department may learn much by a study of the course which others are pursuing; and all may learn how varied a treasure-house human nature is, how manifold are the pathways of its progress, and how endless the lights of knowledge which conduct it to a common end. One of the most evident inferences from the variety of human nature and the possibilities of human progress, is the value of an eclectic spirit, and of sympathies that are truly and inexhaustibly catholic.

A second result is, that self-satisfaction, or the con-


ceit of attainment—that worse foe of progress—becomes impossible. Every one who feels that the ideal overhangs his actual performances will retain a sense of insufficiency. Always craving deeper insight and a larger wisdom, aspiring after new attainment, and on the outlook for fresh knowledge from every quarter, he will show a proportionate humility, and invariable candour towards new truth. No conclusion come to, as the result of the research of other men, will be despised, and none that he has himself reached will be dogmatically assumed to be final. There may be confidence in what has been gained, in alliance with the grander Socratic feeling, ‘all that I know is that I know nothing.’ We may have learned that ‘best of all philosophical lessons,’ that we know only in part; without ignoring the value, and the validity of what we do know. We may repose in the light we have, while we seek its increase; and sensitively shrink from the vanity, which imagines its little light to be the centre of all truth and knowledge.

Thus culture, while diffusing intellectual calm, always induces a slight intellectual restlessness. As it is a progress towards a result which can never be wholly attained—a constant process of *becoming*, of which the issues are very dimly seen,—the stimulus it receives from the unattained breeds humility in the pursuer. In proportion to its manifoldness, to the number of forces that co-operate to produce it, and to the unforeseen issues that arise out of it, there is a total absence of the self-satisfaction which accompanies a clearly defined mental horizon. Self-complacency is impossible to one, the possibilities of whose nature are infinite; and the pride of attainment, however fre-

quently it exists, is philosophically inadmissible by those who recognise the doctrine we enforce.

Another result of equal value is that the harmonies, in search of which some of the ablest minds have toiled so earnestly,—harmonies between science and religion, between the spheres of knowledge and of feeling, between reason and faith,—emerge naturally, and without a struggle. If we recognise the fact that all our powers are in their own place lights and guides, that all co-operate to one end since human nature is a unity—and that our perfection consists in the harmony of all and the suppression of none—the possibility of a collision between faith and reason is prevented. If we have a faculty of reason, and also an instinct of trust which outsoars the methods of the reason, and which carries us into regions where the understanding does not follow,—except to put into subsequent intellectual shape the conclusions which that instinct reaches,—there can be no final antagonism between the several parts of our nature. Each faculty or instinct leaves scope for the simultaneous action of every other tendency.

Moreover, it is evident that in no department of research, or province of inquiry can we employ only one portion of our nature, if we are to employ it faithfully ; least of all, when our study is directed to that which appeals to, or addresses the whole nature. We may not, at one stage of inquiry, make use of reason alone, and at another fall back on faith exclusively ; any more than we may expect to solve the problems of history, by rational analysis alone ; or elaborate the canons of criticism, by acts of faith ; or bring controversy to a close, by the mere juxtaposition of sentences,



wrenched from their context, and taken at random from a long series of historical books. Equally, at all times, and in every inquiry, we must combine the action of all our powers, so far as that is possible, and exert the entire force of our intellectual and moral being. Thus, it would be as great an evil in the interest of Philosophy to arrest, by some intellectual ligature, the free circulation of the moral life, or the spontaneous action of the heart; as it would be a mistake in the interest of Religion to limit the keen sweep of our reasoning faculty. To be the partisan of the higher nature is as foolish a procedure, as to be the biased advocate of the lower; and all such exclusiveness brings with it, soon or late, the penalty of anarchy, or a tumult of the powers, more or less conscious. It has the brand of imperfection stamped upon it at the first; and, in addition, it works to its own destruction.

But the question may still be put, Can any one realise this ideal? It is easy to issue the abstract precept, 'Be perfect,'—cultivate your nature till it is perfect; but can any one approach within even distant range of that perfection? Has not the pursuit been always destined to disappointment, and does not the precept, when tested by actual practice, seem issued in sublime irony to man? as the majority of answers to our philosophical problems seem little else than the echoes of the questions we propose; or, as Carlyle says of hope,

What is Hope? a smiling rainbow,
Children follow through the wet;
'Tis not here, still yonder! yonder!
Never urchin found it yet.

Is not the same thing true of this Ideal, held up, like

the cup of Tantalus, before human lips ? Are there not gigantic obstacles in the way of its realization, inevitable bias, incurable one-sidedness, faults of mental balance, twists in moral vision, inveterate prejudice, irremovable by culture ? Nay, is it not better that the imperfections of the individual should last, that the race, composed of many individuals, may attain to that to which no one man can reach ? Is it not true that in proportion to the eagerness with which any one aspires after this all-sidedness, he falls short in details,—that he loses the perfection of the parts, in aiming at the perfection of the whole ? Does not the pursuit of culture lose in intensity what it gains in breadth, and while it widens the horizon of the mind, does it not dim its sight ? Finally, may not the cultured contemplation of many sides of a problem—especially if it concerns human duty—relax the sinews of moral effort, emasculate the man, and result in dilettantism ?

These objections are not to be lightly dismissed. It is true that no man has ever attained to the ideal ; but that is only saying that all men are incomplete, that no one has reached the harmony of a perfect life. It is also true, as already stated, that perfection of achievement is only possible by division of labour ; and that, in proportion to excellence in one department is our inevitable deficiency in another. With the individual, and with the nation alike, the flow of the tide on one shore involves its ebb from another ; the swing of the pendulum to one side implies that it has left the other. And it is a problem whether this oscillation will ever end, whether a nation can ever unite in its corporate life, as at a common focus, the grander characteristics of its predecessors ; as it is a question

whether an individual will ever arise with an individuality absolutely cosmopolitan, and who will therefore comprehend the scattered excellences of others blent in harmonious union. It is not likely, though we cannot say it is impossible. The analogy of the past is against it, but the possibilities of the future embrace it. It may be, that in the future, as in the past, the man of thought will be lamed for action, by the very fact that he is widened for contemplation; and that the man of practice will be narrowed in thought, by the very fact that he is animated in action. The temperament which men inherit conditions the type of character and culture, which they realise; and it may be as impossible for the individual to choose his own type, or to regulate it when chosen, as it is for him to alter the form of his countenance, or to add a cubit to his stature. It is also possible that, in some natures, the strength of one faculty implies the weakness of another.

Let us admit then, that no one is able to reach the ideal harmony, to which the laws of culture point; none the less is it the end of his existence; and, as he proceeds upon his journey, he approaches nearer to that, which he can never absolutely reach. While he lives on this planet he is surrounded by most imperfect educational influences. He inherits a certain bias from his ancestors. He carries it in his blood, and develops it in many forms. He acquires another bias, towards special lines of thought, feeling, and action. He contracts it by contagion, in subtlest ways, from all with whom he associates. Certain prejudices, sympathies, and antipathies are inextricably bound up with the very constitution of his nature; while hindrances lie across

his path, in the very realms of culture into which he enters. In part, every man shapes his own ideal ; while humanity shapes for him the other part. The most that he can therefore hope to reach is an approximation to that, which for ever eludes his grasp. He even ascends to heights which he finds he is incompetent to keep. He breathes for a time a serener and less troubled air, and is invigorated by some gleaming prospect from the mountain summit; but he must soon descend to the more prosaic valley, perhaps to toil in some vineyard in the heat of the day. The very definition of his 'chief end' is, as we have said, a constant *process of becoming*, rather than an act of realization. It is a movement, now swift and now tardy, towards a goal, which ever shifts and recedes as his culture rises. Always about to be, it never fully is. The ideal grows as he grows, advancing towards the measure of the stature of the perfect. The same power of intellectual vision which enables him to discern the ideal in the distance, reveals at the same instant his own defects, and he feels from what a solemn depth of experience Wordsworth spoke when he wrote of those

Fallings from us, vanishings,
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized ;
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Doth tremble, like a guilty thing surprised.

If, however, we admit the ultimate necessity of cultivating all our powers in conformity with the precept 'Be ye perfect,' how are we to know our immediate duty, with a view to that perfection ? What particular powers ought we to cultivate at a given time, to secure a special end ? Since all our powers cannot be trained

together, is there no risk of arbitrary selection, in our choice of one at a particular period? Nay, is there no risk that the inventory we make of the powers and capacities of human nature may be as incomplete as our own idiosyncrasy is defective? Manifestly, we *may* become the victims of a faulty ideal, and may carry on the education of our natures along a beaten track of mere individualism, mistaking it for what is broader and freer. We may never traverse the wide areas of existing knowledge, feeling, and action; just as we may obstinately take

the rustic murmur of our burg

For the great wave that echoes round the world.

Hence the need of a wide acquaintance with what our fellowmen are doing around us, of the pathways they are traversing, of the inheritances on which they have entered, or the regions they are exploring. We may say of culture, as Tennyson says of freedom, let it

broaden slowly down

From precedent to precedent.

We must be guided by our predecessors, while we are not their slaves; just as we enter into their labours, while we cannot rest in any of them. But we are in no case left to the workings of mere caprice, in the choice of a special pathway, at a special time. Our great guiding instincts decide these pathways for us. The balance of the powers being, as we have said, originally different in each man, and the subsequent training of the faculties being very diverse, we find that long before we reach the time at which we must decide what track we shall mainly pursue, it is already marked out for us, by the working of these instincts

themselves. That we may often educate ourselves amiss, we must accept as more or less inevitable. We must end by being to a great extent unsymmetrical, because we began with an unconscious mental twist which we inherited. But it is the function of culture to rectify the bias, to redress the inequality, and to re-adjust the balance, so far as that is possible. One thing no man is at liberty to do,—to yield hopelessly to the difficulties of his position, and acquiesce in his fate as the inevitable victim of a bias. We magnify the virtue of the chase, even though the pursuit is not always rewarded with immediate success. It is the condition of future attainment, and is nobler even without the attainment, than is the attainment without the chase. He who gives up the pursuit not only succumbs ignobly to defeat, but the defeat becomes more real and appalling, as he continues to succumb. Losing sight of the real destination of man, and the end of his existence, he becomes, perhaps, the slave of some profession, or trade, or handicraft; solacing himself, after the ignominy seems past, by the more obvious practical utilities of life. It would be easy to show in detail how fatal to the highest life of the individual is this despair of culture, and of how little value is any material benefit he may confer upon his fellows, if his own life has withered, or its growth been arrested at the root.

There is a wide difference between the preceding doctrine, and the many special 'schemes' which have been devised and submitted to men, for the rectification of their life. The laws of culture are briefly summed up in this, *'Let your whole nature expand to the very uttermost of which it is capable, in every*

*possible direction, that it may grow into a perfect structure, compacted by that which every joint sup-
plieth.'* It prescribes no rules. It is utterly catholic, cosmopolitan, and inexhaustible ; yet it is precise, defined, and clear. It bids us 'forget what is behind, and reach out to what is before ; nevertheless whereunto we have already attained,' it bids us 'walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.' Now, in contrast to this severe simplicity, many philosophical moralists point to one special end, the realization of which would lead mankind, they say, to blessedness. Sanguine that they had discovered some scheme by which to rectify the disorganization of human life, they have assumed the office of guide, and have said to others, 'Follow us ; act thus, and you will succeed ; take this path, and you will reach the shrine.' Select any one of those schemes, devised and lauded as a cure for the varied ills under which humanity labours ; suppose it in full operation, and achieving the results which the most sanguine of its teachers could desire, —would there be an approach to the ideal of human nature ? We venture to affirm that even the most ardent and enthusiastic advocate of a special scheme, would, in the gradual working out of his idea, pause, and wish some new expedient added to it. He would find that as men gradually adopted his suggestion, it appealed to but a portion of their nature, and that while it quickened one part, it left others untouched ; that its isolation was its weakness. He would speedily desire to supplement, or underprop his scheme, by sundry new devices of larger import ; and, whether he did so or not, humanity would soon overstep the limits prescribed to it by its self-constituted teacher. It

would either quietly, or tumultuously, break down the barrier; and advance, on its many-sided career, to a destiny beyond its own calculation to foresee. It is for this reason that systems of Philosophy are endlessly changing, that new schools of Poetry and Art rise and fall again. It is for the same reason that History is re-written by new analysts and explorers, who study the fossil remains of humanity from fresh points of view; and that Science marches ever forward with unimpeded feet on its pathways of discovery. We might add that, indirectly, it is for the same reason that Social and Political schemes are perpetually oscillating, and that Commerce finds endless outlets for its energy. The great tidal waves of human thought, feeling, and action sweep onwards with the revolutions of the ages, carrying new treasure, and depositing it upon the shore; and these become successive strata, each with its own record of past life, which the future historians and interpreters of humanity have to decipher and reveal.

In the light of what has now been advanced, we may be able to estimate Mr Arnold's teaching on the subject of culture. There are two tendencies which stand somewhat sharply contrasted in human nature—that, viz., which tends to thought and contemplation, and that which tends to work and action. To these two tendencies Mr Arnold has given the names of Hellenism and Hebraism; because the former—or the tendency to thought and contemplation—was the ideal of the ancient Greeks; the latter—the tendency to obedience and action—was predominant in the Jewish race, and characteristic of the Hebrew law. He says that 'the force which en-

courages us to stand stanch and fast by the rule and ground we have is Hebraism; and the force which encourages us to go back upon this rule, and to try the very ground on which we appear to stand, is Hellenism—a turn for giving our consciousness free play, and enlarging its range.’ There is much to justify this distinction. It signalises a radical difference between two tendencies of human nature. The terms Hellenism and Hebraism may therefore be taken as descriptive of the two main streams of human effort, as these tend respectively to thought and to action. It is undeniable that they often act as counter currents in the sea of human life, producing storm; while they ought always to blend and to co-operate. Mr Arnold thinks that a predominance of Hebraism now threatens our English national life, and all our modern culture; and he would correct this by a strong infusion of the Hellenic element—that spirit which sits apart from practical questions, and lets the mind and consciousness play around the problems which are raised.

The contrast between the two tendencies is seen in its sharpest form, in the way in which they would respectively deal with the practical evils, which menace every human life. ‘Sit still, and contemplate them,’ is the advice of Hellenism. ‘Arise and abolish them,’ is the counsel of Hebraism. ‘Let your consciousness play freely round about the problems, lest you fall down and worship the fetish of some practical reform,’ says the man of thought. ‘Go forth into their midst, and “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,”’ says the rule of Hebrew action.

It seems evident that to continue thinking over

problems that refuse to act, without proceeding to act, is to become ultimately paralysed. Our faculties of thought may refuse to play any longer round the problem, lest in the process it becomes a different but less worthy feast than the other. The Hellenist is in no haste to remove the evils that linger in the world. He appreciates the principle, 'Let both grow together until the harvest.' They are but a few tares amongst the wheat, a variety to study and contemplate. It would be an unsafe experiment to try to uproot a single tare by an effort of the will; rather let your consciousness play freely around the tare. He is averse to all crusades against existing evil. Did not the crusaders of mediæval times, embarking on a bootless errand, come back in ignominy and failure?

But is not history—even Greek history—full of abrupt and stormy movements? And have not some of the most sudden and revolutionary changes in history heralded the seasons of choicest intellectual growth in a people; just as the most energetic efforts of the will have promoted the moral life of the individual? Even Nature has her earthquakes, symbolic of those human forces that are subterranean and under-working; and violent changes have been productive of ultimate good, in keeping up the balance of force in the universe. Whether therefore his action resembles nature's more violent changes, or her more tranquil processes, whenever an unquestionable evil exists, it is the duty of each one to endeavour to remove it; and to clear the way for future contemplation, by the vigour with which he works in beating it down. As Browning profoundly says—

The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be—but finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means—a very different thing !
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man, and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London—not Fool's Paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealise away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

In the same great poem he condenses much thought
in a single line, which we may apply, as we have
applied the preceding extract—

I am much, you are nothing ! you would be all,
I would be merely much.

There can be no doubt that a doctrine which lays
an almost exclusive stress on mere thought, tends
less or more to emasculate the character, and indefinitely
postpones action. The efforts of the will are
subordinated to the calm procedure of the serene in-
telligence. Be it admitted that we need more of the
light of reason to check the vagaries of a capricious
activity, and the impulsive enthusiasm of a very prac-
tical people, in a practical age. Nevertheless, as the
age is on the whole as practical as it is contemplative,
we must sympathise with its forward movements, or we
unfit our natures for the reception of that light which
these movements reveal, and cramp our intellectual
energies. It is true that the majority of men need
to reflect more accurately before they act, and the
discipline of thought is the most valuable means of

regulating the very miscellaneous and ill-assorted forces, which tend continually to action in an unreflective manner. But no careful student of history can fail to see that the risk of lapsing into quietism has been greatest in the most intellectual men, and the most intellectual ages. Meditative luxury may breed inaction and a loss of faith in the worth and power of action, which is one of the greatest calamities that can befall a thinker. In proportion to the very delicacy of his perceptions, he may shrink from action, till he has satisfied himself that he has avoided the risk of bias. Thus, a disinclination to arise and take part in redressing unquestionable wrongs is very easily engendered. The fascinations of cultured thought are great, especially when accompanied by a recoil from the rawness of Philistine modes of action, with their precipitate and unreflective ardours. But the Hellenist is most likely to become disgusted with practical life altogether; and, in his anxiety to escape from the whirlpool of blind endeavour, he runs the risk of being left high and dry on the rock of a listless inactivity.

This evil is one which menaces human culture in every age. Although we may admit in words that thoughtful action is as necessary as active thought can be, we may unduly circumscribe the sphere of action, and find ourselves biassed towards the Hellenism, which rests and thinks that it may not work unwisely, in our nervous horror of the Hebraism which works promptly (though it may be awkwardly) that it may at length see aright and wisely. And this is the extreme to which some teachers tend. They admire all calm repose, self-centered, serene, undisturbed by the roar and strife of time. They pity the minute and

toilsome workers who lack profounder vision, and who labour in a groove, because they see but one thing which they ought to do, and do it eagerly. They overlook the fact that in all moral problems the legislative function of the intellect is the mere herald of the executive function of the will, and that we must sometimes act and obey, in order that we may see and know.

Every worker, who seems to carry his ideal into practice, must come into close contact with the ungainliness and awkward movements of those, who are acting without an ideal around him. And this is precisely the difficulty which the man of the highest culture finds in all his efforts to translate his ideal into actual life. The moment he begins to work amongst the raw unidealized portions of humanity, that moment he meets with an arrest; and, it may be sometimes necessary to make a compromise, in order to succeed at all. He may have to descend, with his ideal somewhat veiled, to a level where, if fully displayed, it would not be understood; in order that, by slowly unveiling it, he may raise the tone of society by degrees. It might even seem as if the worker's own ideal must suffer from his contact with the masses of mankind; and that thus all reformers must lay down their Hellenic completeness on an altar worthy of the sacrifice. Inevitably, they are men of one, or at most a few ideas. If burdened with many, they would be proportionably fettered in the carrying out of each. Let it be granted that practical action is one-sided,—that it involves a sacrifice to the completeness of the individual or the nation. The want of it, however, is equally one-sided, and involves an

equal sacrifice. And both the world and individuals have hitherto advanced by a series of one-sidednesses. Time, nevertheless, tends to rectify these. Reactions are inevitable, from the very fact that the extreme has been approached ; and thus both Nature and Humanity readjust themselves. But the man or the nation that would rest in the centre of intellectual calm, and dread activity from the risk of one-sidedness, invariably stagnate in the repose they love, and miss the gain of the extremes when the mean state is reached.

At the beginning of this article we referred to the relation in which the doctrine of ideal culture stands to kindred problems ; and especially to the two questions closely related to the one with which we started, 'What is the chief end of Man ?' viz., 'Whence have we come ?' and 'Whither do we tend ?' We may be able to answer the first of the three, without obtaining a philosophical reply to the other two ; we may know our duty while we are ignorant of our origin and our destiny ; but we could with difficulty pursue the course which the answer to the first question indicates, without some *approximate* solution of the others. And every doctrine of culture which ignores them, or pronounces them insoluble, is to that extent defective in moral power, if it does not lack moral leverage. We need some ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος. What force is to urge us forwards in the career of a many-sided life ? What is to facilitate the progressive harmony of our powers ? Is it true, as Mr Arnold represents Empedocles as saying—

Once read thy own heart right,
And thou hast done with fears ;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years ?



Must the force proceed from human nature itself? or must it rather spring from a perception of our Origin and our Destination? If we have approximate evidence for the belief that we have emerged from the Infinite, not as atoms developed by the slow evolution of an eternal Force, but as beings cast in the image of the Creator, and destined to immortality, we have at least a motive for the culture of our powers that is inexhaustible. If, on the contrary, we merely stand by the side of the stream of existence, or float on its upper surface, ignorant of its origin and of its issues, we may drift with the current, but we can have little motive to advance. It is a matter of comparative indifference where we stand along the margin of a line, both ends of which are lost in the darkness of the Infinite. But if we know the points from which and to which we tend we have inducements and stimuli to urge us forward. Every branch of philosophic study, of scientific labour, or of artistic toil, yields some new element with which to carry on the education of our powers. We reverence the past, and we strive to learn from its accumulated store, but we aim at a larger and mellower culture than any that the past has bequeathed to us; while we remember that Man himself is 'greater than anything that educates him,' greater than any object that surrounds him, in the universe of finite existence.

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS A THEORY OF POETRY.

(The British Quarterly Review, January 1873.)

THERE are many things, the nature of which we know somewhat vaguely by intuition, while their rational or scientific basis remains unknown. Our earliest notions are necessarily due more to instinct than to knowledge; and a characteristic dimness is attached to all our ultimate ideas, simply because they are final, and insusceptible of farther analysis. What are Time, Space, Substance, Force, Causation, Beauty? As St Augustine said of one of these, 'If not asked, I know; if you ask me, I know not'—expressing aphoristically the truth that all our knowledge recedes into mystery, and arises out of the inexplicable. But human curiosity, which gives rise to Science, seeks an explanation of whatsoever exists; and all inquiry, if pushed beyond the superficial collection and register of facts, lands the inquirer in Philosophy.

Of the three great departments of Philosophy, intellectual, ethical, and esthetic (or that of knowledge, of morals, and of taste), the two former have yielded results which are undoubtedly more definite and satisfactory than the latter. A complete theory of art is still amongst the desiderata of speculative research. Even when the inquiry has been limited to points of comparative detail—such as the nature of Poetry, the first principle of Music, or the essence of Archi-

lectual law—the question cannot be said to have been wrought out so successfully as the corresponding problems in intellectual and moral science. Whether from the nature of the theme, or from the miscellaneousness of the facts whence the theories have been drawn, we usually miss the rigor of scientific accuracy. Nor is this to be wondered at. The region which they traverse, and of which they endeavour to furnish us with some intellectual chart, is much more subtle, ethereal, and delicate, than that of ethics or of mental philosophy. To men in general, there is an obviousness in the dictates of morality, in the reports of the senses and the intellect, which does not belong to the judgments of the esthetic faculty.

It is impossible, within the limits of a brief article, to discuss the whole of this wide and difficult subject. We offer no doctrine of the Beautiful, as a whole; but, confining ourselves to one sub-section of the great 'hierarchy of the arts,' we propose a theory as to the nature and origin of *Poetry*, which may perhaps cast a ray of light on the intricacies of the problem.

The definitions of poetry advanced by critics, and by poets themselves, are numerous and distracting in their variety. But the accumulation of these—no matter how opposite or even contradictory to each other they may be—presents no obstacle to a true philosophy of art. Every theory springs from a root of truth, however *outré* and distorted the stem may be. Nor is it difficult to account for the inadequacy of many existing definitions. They have arisen, on the one hand, from the limited area whence the theorist has gleaned his facts; and, on the other,

from the exigencies of some hypothesis assumed at starting, which has led its author to ignore certain necessary data, or to misread others. Every adequate theory must contain the intellectual essence of the phenomena with which it deals ; and a true theory of poetry is simply the scientific interpretation of the very miscellaneous features which poetic literature presents. Hence it must be absolutely catholic in its recognition of all the facts of poetic production. It must not be the theory of the lyric, or of the epic, or of the drama ; but of that common element, out of which they all arise, and of which they are the manifestations.

This is precisely one difficulty in the way of the scientific theorist. He must discover the universal element underneath all special or particular forms, a principle definite and precise, yet elastic and relevant to all the varied phases which imaginative literature has assumed in the past. His knowledge ought to be great, his critical tact greater, and his power of generalisation greatest of all.

Another source of difficulty is the widely different senses in which the *word* poetry is used, not only in common speech, but also in philosophical discussion. Scarcely two writers make use of it in exactly the same signification. Now it denotes the mere 'art of versification,' apart from its subject matter ; again it is regarded in its root or origin in the soul of the poet, apart from its outward form. Now the product, and again the process of production is referred to. Sometimes the term denotes the vague spirit, or subtle essence of Nature, or of the various arts. Thus we hear of the poetry of science, of music, or of

human life. There is a vagueness, to some minds delicious, but to others altogether distracting, in this irregularity in the popular use of the term. We desire to get beneath the confusion, and to ascertain, if possible, the essential nature of the thing itself, or its generic character and relations.

At the outset of our inquiry some very obvious distinctions present themselves. We must not confound the poetic faculty or instinct, in the mind of the poet, with the result of its operation in the poetic product, or the construction of imaginative forms. The one is the root whence the other, as a many-branched tree, arises. The root is underground, in the soul of the poet; the branch alone becomes visible to others, in the creation of poems. The poetic faculty, however, is no special endowment of the more gifted seers or men of genius. The poet's soul is not of a radically different structure from that of other men. His temperament, the balance of his powers, and the calibre of some of them, may be different. But the peculiar talent which constitutes him a poet, in addition to the imaginative faculty which everyone possesses in a greater or less degree, is the capacity of representing, in the fit language of rhythmic forms, that higher intellectual insight to which he has risen, or that vivid feeling with which his own spirit has been pre-eminently inspired. It is the power of translating thought and emotion, from their inarticulate and latent state, into the forms of articulate speech, whether these be metrical or not.

Again, we must distinguish between the scientific and the poetic imagination. It is not mere insight into the secrets of Nature or of Humanity that con-

stitutes a man a poet—although all true poets are *seers*—for the end and aim of science is also to explore these secrets, and to register the results of the exploration. Nor is it sufficient to fall back on the etymology of the word ‘Poet,’ which signifies ‘maker’ or ‘creative artist.’ The constructor of a steam engine is also a maker, though what he produces is usually (it may be erroneously) regarded as most prosaic. The mind, which originates a philosophy, or consolidates a nationality, is as truly a maker, as the writer of a tragedy, or the composer of a song. The poet is thus manifestly a creator of a particular order. His sphere is not a limited one; for he deals with the whole area of Nature, and the entire keyboard of Humanity. But he surveys his area in a special mood of mind. He records and reproduces the notes he hears, in a manner peculiar to himself. The world which presents itself to his eye is the same as that in which the truth-seeker and the moralist move; but he sees it under a different guise. The characteristic to which he primarily looks, and the apprehension of which moves him to utterance, is that of Beauty, in one or other of its manifold forms. Beauty, however, never presents itself to his eye in absolute perfection, it is always recognised over against a foil of imperfection: and it is the presence of its opposite, alongside or intermingled with it, and marring this perfection, which gives rise to the poetic passion. The perception of the latter element, producing uneasiness, leads to an idealisation of the real, as it exists around us in its concrete forms, whether in nature or in character, in historic incident or in individual life. This, however, is to anticipate.

It may be convenient, before going farther, to recall some of the more famous definitions of poetry advanced by philosophers or critics.

Aristotle held that its essence consisted in the imitation (*μίμησις*) of Nature, corresponding to the pre-Raphaelitism of the Realist school of painters. In this he has had a large following, notably amongst recent writers, H. Taine. Lord Bacon, with deeper insight in this direction than his Greek predecessor, placed its essence in imagination, or the idealization of nature; and he, too, is the founder of a school. It has been defined as 'the natural language of excited feeling, intense and inspired;' and as 'a work of the imagination wrought into form by art.' A suggestive definition is that which represents it as 'the indirect expression' of that which 'cannot be expressed directly.' Still more suggestive is that recently advanced by a writer in one of our weekly journals of criticism—'Poetry is the protest of the emotions against the domination of the intellect;' and the various schools of poetry have been thus described:—Greek poetry, as 'the protest of free-will against the domination of fate or necessity;' Jewish poetry, as 'the passionate outbreak of human love, devotion and trust, against the restraints of mere outward law;' Dante's poetry, as 'the protest of human instincts against ecclesiastical tyranny;' Chaucer's against 'the iron monotony of mediæval life;' Shakspeare's, as 'the general assertion of the right of man to be as various and as wonderful a creature as God had made him, which was the fit accompaniment of that new spring-time of human thought and enterprise, the revival of learning, and the discovery of the New World.' And in the

modern poetry of Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, there is detected the same remonstrance of the human spirit against external pressure, against the despotism of nature, and even the yoke of mere science or knowledge. This is a much more valuable contribution to a true theory than the definition of Keble, who, in his lectures delivered from the Oxford Chair of Poetry, considered it as 'a vent for overcharged feeling or a full imagination, when the mind is overpowered and requires relief;' or than that of Sir Francis Doyle, who traces it to 'dissatisfaction with what is present and close at hand;' which, he says, is, 'one of nature's silent promises to the heart, one stimulus to the advancement of the race, one source of the abiding greatness of man.' In a remarkably beautiful essay 'in defence of poetry,' Shelley is quite as remarkably deficient in clearness of definition. 'To be a poet,' he says, 'is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word the good, which exists in the relation between existence and perception, and between perception and expression.' Again, he says, 'poetry expresses those arrangements of language which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man.' This is nearly as unsatisfactory as the deliverance of a recent ambitious writer, on 'Poetics' that poetry is 'the record of pleasure, intended to produce pleasure.' Wordsworth's essays on this subject—like all that he ever wrote—are worthy of the most thoughtful pondering; although his theory, erring through a restriction of the sphere of imagination, stands in marked contrast to his own practice of the art. It would be easy to multiply

definitions ; but those given will sufficiently illustrate the drift of speculation, and of criticism, on the subject.

In seeking a solution of the problem from a fresh point of view, we find two laws governing all our intellectual processes, the adequate recognition of which may perhaps afford a key to the true nature of poetry. The first is, that all our knowledge is, in one sense, a knowledge of differences and contrasts. We neither know, nor can know anything, except in its contrast with something unlike it. We are conscious of self, only in contrast with what is not self ; of matter, in its contrast with mind ; of good, as opposed to evil ; of beauty, in its opposition to ugliness ; of the infinite intelligence, in its antithesis to the finite. The fact of opposition, of difference, or contrariety, thus conditions all our knowledge. The second law is that, in the free and unimpeded energy of the faculties, apprehending the objects to which they stand related, there is always an attendant joy. As Aristotle pointed out, and Sir William Hamilton has illustrated in detail, pleasure is the concomitant or reflex of the free action of the human faculties.

Taking, then, these two simple—and I think ultimate laws with us, let us realize our position in the surrounding universe. With both the outward and inward eye, with the senses and the intellect combined, we gaze around us. Our faculties apprehend a multitude of objects which arrest and detain them, which at once engross and stimulate their action. There are lights, colours, forms, motions, sounds ; and the objects of nature are beheld by us clothed with the raiment of the beautiful. In the apprehension of this, if the energy of our faculties be

free and unimpeded, there is pleasure. But associated with the beautiful, we discern the presence of a counter element, that, viz., of the ugly or deformed. By the presence of this alien element, the imaginative faculties are arrested in their freedom; and in proportion to the pleasure arising from their unimpeded action is the pain which springs from their arrest. The human spirit tends instinctively towards the beautiful. It has a natural affinity with all beauty and harmony, and their perception awakens a joyous activity of the powers. But the deformed or the inharmonious also surrounds it, hindering the freedom and repressing the action of its faculties. Our yearning for the beautiful is keen, in proportion to our experience of its opposite. No one relishes the solitude and glory of the mountains so vividly as he who comes to them direct from city smoke and noise. The sense of the inharmonious and the artificial around us quickens our perception of natural harmony; but in no case is our enjoyment of the latter unalloyed. We always feel that the beauty we behold in nature, or in humanity, might be more perfect than it is; and we constantly detect the notes of discord in the midst of harmony, which betray the presence of its opposite.

That type of perfect in the mind,
In nature we can nowhere find.

The uneasiness which this creates originates both a desire and an effort to escape from the presence of the inharmonious, and to get into the presence and under the influence of the beautiful. We desire to subdue the deformed by the lovely. Instinctively—without ever thinking of this as the rationale of our act—we

strive to rid ourselves of the uneasiness, produced by that element with which the human spirit is in natural and abiding conflict, and which arrests its freedom. And it is precisely in this effort to reach the beautiful, through all conscious or unconscious hindrance, that poetry has its birth. We perceive in the mingled phenomena of the universe, beauty marred by deformity. Instinctively, we rise towards the beautiful, urged on by the stimulus—whether gentle or severe—of its opposite, with its uncongeniality, and hindrance to the free action of our natures: and the very effort thus to rise is the spring of the poetic impulse.

Suppose now that we inhabited a world 'of beauty all compact,' from which every discordant element was absent, we might rest in the passive contemplation of its loveliness, but we should be without poetry. There is some truth in the extreme position of Vinet, that poetry is due to our decline from perfection. 'When Innocence retreated tearfully from our earth,' says Vinet, 'she met Poetry on the threshold. They passed close by, looked at each other, and each went her way—the one to heaven, and the other to the dwellings of men.' Translated from the language of allegory into fact, this means that Poetry, being the outcome and expression of our yearning for perfection, could not exist in a perfect world. If every object in Nature, if every fact and occurrence, or element in life presented us with harmony, the poet's vocation would cease. The human faculties would no longer be creative. They could not reach after the ideal; for the ideal and the real would be identical. Imagination's highest effort would be a transcript of what is, not the creation of what might be, and of a nobler than that which is. The poet

would be merely the historian of past types of beauty, and the recorder of its present forms; and all that varied interest, passionate enthusiasm, and nameless spell which now afflures him in his quest for the ideal, would vanish in the prosaic chronicle of facts. But, with deformity subtly intermingled with beauty in the universe that now is,—surrounded as we are with discords, material and moral, in the midst of harmony,—the imagination feels a constant spur to effect, in the interests of the beautiful, a reconciliation of the things opposed.

Thus, Poetry may be roughly said *to pursue Beauty as marred by deformity*; and the intensity of the pursuit marks the intensity of the poetic character. The highest poet is he who aims most earnestly after the perfection of 'the beautiful' in the poetic reconciliation of the discords of the universe. Towards this all-embracing Universal he strains his energies. In his products, the creations of his faculty in this high quest, there must always be the blending of the real with the ideal, or rather, the leavening of the former with the latter. He deals with the real as he finds it—beauty blent with ugliness, discord in the midst of harmony, sorrow in the heart of joy, good commingled with evil—and he strives to idealize it, to transfigure the reality, and to harmonize the discord, by means of poetic idealization. Standing on the level and prosaic earth of the actual, he breathes, through imagination, the higher air of the ideal. Etherealized by it, and borne on subtle wing into the region of a higher harmony, he discerns the remote reconciliation, which men who only breathe the air of the actual never know, and cannot comprehend.

Thence inspired, he descends again to the sphere of the actual, and proclaims the 'open secret' to his fellows.

But, in this disclosure to his fellows, he makes use of an instrument which distinguishes the poet, as an interpreter, from others in the artist fraternity. That medium is *Language*, shaped into metrical or musical form. Language is the branch which springs from the root of poetry in the poet's soul; while its metrical or rhythmical forms may be said to correspond to the foliage which clothes the branches.

There might be the most delicate appreciation of the beautiful in the mind of the seer, without any embodiment of the results of that appreciation, in art; that is to say, without the creation of poems. Sympathy with every phase of esthetic loveliness might exist, without its taking shape, and clothing itself in a communicable form. It might remain personal to the seer himself, and not being recorded for others, would never become an inheritance of the race. In its silent birthplace, however, this seed of poetry always runs the risk of decay. It must rise from its seed-bed, if it is to be an abiding property even of the poet himself; and imaginative genius usually proclaims its presence by the facility with which its possessor—who is otherwise the mute contemplator of the beautiful—reveals his insight to others, through his mastery of language. Written language is to the poet, what the notes of the gamut are to the musician, and his pigments are to the painter, his marble to the sculptor, and stone, wood, &c., to the architect. All these are expressive media of thought and feeling; but Language immeasurably transcends them in its power of render-

ing the minutest shades of spiritual meaning. It is the garment in which Mind is most fitly clothed, and through which it is made most intelligible.

This instrument which the poet wields is, in one sense, the most curious of all existences. Being the vocal expression of thought uttered by corporeal organs, or its written expression appealing to the sense of sight, it is half-material; being the symbol of ideas, and the index of feeling, it is half-spiritual. It is the vehicle of emotion, and the record of intelligence; and with it the Poet records in permanent forms the visions of his inward eye, making them glow with the life of the imagination. Much of the charm of his words is due to the power of metrical language which shrouds the bare conceptions of the intellect in a luminous veil, so as to transfigure and glorify them. It at once defines the vague aspirations which tend towards the Infinite, and brings them home to the earth. Condensing them into clear expression, it gives a voice to that dumb wonder which the glory of the universe calls forth. Thus a single line of poetry often contains more concentrated thought than a dozen pages of prose; while the thought is etherealized, and ascends, till it loses itself in the infinite and the divine.

We may perhaps see further into the origin of poetry if we compare the tendency which gives rise to it, with the impulse which leads to the study of the laws of nature, and originates the sciences. One whose spirit lies open to the teachings of the outer Universe, surrounded by manifold and mysterious phenomena, finds arising within him a twofold impulse. The first leads him to investigate the processes of Nature, to explore her hidden recesses, that he may know more and

more accurately *what is*. The other leads him to recombine what he has seen, in fresh imaginative forms, to reproduce what he has already beheld and to idealize it, or to create new artificial products suggested by it. In the former case he finds himself under the dominion of law. His investigations are not only within its domain, they are directed to the discovery of wider and yet wider laws. In the presence of nature, he fain would penetrate into her farthest recess to wrest her secret, if possible, from the shrine. As he continues his research, he comes upon innumerable *arcana*, the mysteries of which stir his wonder. These secrets baffle him, and arrest his powers. But as he again looks forth upon the universe, he sees the raiment of the beautiful around these very phenomena into the heart of which he cannot pierce. The glory of nature at once overawes his spirit, and quickens his wonder into admiration, till gradually it ceases to be silent, becomes vocal, and breaks into a song. He perceives that this Universe, which he cannot fathom, is in constant motion, in alternate ebb and flow. The rhythm of nature's inscrutable force moves his spirit to rhythmic utterance. The perception of mystery, baffling his faculties of knowledge, brings with it a certain amount of pain or uneasiness. The discernment of the beautiful, covering or surrounding this very mystery, awakens pleasure. There is a smile which the poet sees in the heart of the universe, into which the mere thinker cannot penetrate. And whenever this is discerned, the calm contemplation of science, with its dry light, is exchanged for feeling, and a movement more or less impassioned, leading to an outburst of rapture and ending in song. While the poet 'muses, the fire

burns ; and then he speaks with his tongue.' It is when the tide of emotion is at the flood,—the waters of the great outer universe urging it from behind,—that he is roused to freest and fullest utterance. None of the allied arts awaken the same glowing ardour of imaginative passion. Poetry, in short, is what Bettina named the music of Beethoven, 'intellectual wine.'

But nature, thus potent and genial in its influence, does not create the poetic fire. It only evokes it from the depths of the human spirit, to which it has made appeal. Nor, on the other hand, does the poet project his own subjectivity upon nature, covering it with an ideal robe of glory, that has been altogether wrought within himself. He is, before all things else, a *seer*. There is a 'pre-established harmony' between the power within, 'the vision and the faculty divine,' and the recognised and interpreted beauty without. These two act and re-act upon each other. If nature simply set her seal upon the poet, and created within him all that he is thereafter able to body forth, his finest productions would be simply photographic. But her function is to elicit and develope those imaginative powers which in their full maturity are able to transcend herself. There is an exquisite harmony between Man and Nature—between the most delicate emotions of the one, and the forms, colours, and changes of the other,—so that its symbols are the fittest language in which human feeling can be expressed. Poetry thus mediates between man and nature. It is a bridge connecting the material and the spiritual spheres; the physical universe being a storehouse of analogies which mirror to us the secrets of humanity, while humanity gives back a reflection of nature's silent processes. It

is an obvious, but little-noticed fact, that the most luminous descriptions of the inner world of human emotion are invariably expressed in terms gathered from the outer realm of Nature; and also, that we always borrow from Humanity in endeavouring to interpret nature. All languages contain the evidence of this principle, embedded as fossil remains in their structure, proving it to be universal.

Whether, therefore, we think of *lyric* poetry, as the expression of a single jet of feeling, or the embodiment of one passion; of *epic* poetry, as the concentrated story of an age or generation, picturesque and full of moving incidents and changes; of the *drama*, as the tragic struggle of individuals against untoward destiny; of *comedy*, as a portrayal of the ludicrous elements which enter into all existence; of the *elegy*, as the memorial song of regret and lamentation over the unfinished; or of *narrative* and *descriptive* poetry, as an attempt to interpret some human incident, or give the meaning of some mood of nature—the essence of all is fundamentally the same. It is essentially a representation of what is, or has been, a new embodiment hinting of some deeper secret hidden underneath; and evermore it pursues the perfect ideal, through the maze, the imperfection, or the discord of the actual world. It is the shallowest theory of Art, which confines it to a transcript or imitation of what is,—the mere copy or mimicry of the actual. Always based upon the real, it is the idealization or exaltation of it. It is (as the Greek term hints) a creation; a fashioning, which is a *re-fashioning*, of elements already present in the universe. But the range of the poet's art, as reproducer and interpreter,

is almost boundless. He can create imaginative pictures which have no real existence and never could have any; not because they fall beneath the actual, but because they transcend it.

In the exercise of this power of imagination, he may realize his relation to the Supreme Spirit of the universe, for the creative power of the Infinite has its shadowy adumbration in the finite. He can create nothing new, but he can make use of all existing material, while he fashions, unmakes, re-fashions, idealizes. In the scientific region, the investigator employs analysis as well as synthesis: and the former is a necessary pre-requisite to the latter. But the poet is always synthetic. He is at once discoverer and inventor, architect and builder. He finds throughout the vast expanse of Nature magnificent storehouses of imagery, expressing the subtlest gradations of human thought and feeling. Through these his spirit wanders brooding, till it becomes vocal, having found the fit embodiment of thought in language. He sees that every phenomena is a symbol of something else; that each object contains a parable; that all Nature is connected by analogy, and interrelated by its symbolism. But in order to this, there must be high imaginative insight. It is this, more than anything else,—the possession of intellectual second-sight,—which constitutes a poet. He has a clearer, finer, and more delicate vision than other men; while his soul is moved to rhythmic strains by the gentle stimuli of which we have spoken. His mental glance and temperament are such, that having seen, he must record his vision; having heard, he must declare it; being inspired, he cannot keep silence.

The poet must also possess what we may call *selective power*, in the choice of his materials. Almost everything in nature may become the subject of a poem; but a severe fastidiousness is essential to poetic unity. A rigid spirit of exclusiveness, with the instinct to reject materials which crowd in from the fertile regions of nature and humanity, is one test of the true artist. 'In what he leaves unsaid,' wrote Schiller, 'I discover the master of style.' All nature is fair, but there are moods of nature brighter and fairer than her common ones. There are moods in which she is obstinate, and almost dumb, in which she will not yield up her secret to the investigator. And the poet must not only select an object which he can shape into an ideal whole, but in endeavouring to grasp the symbolism of Nature, he must seize the moment when she seems to be giving forth the burden of her secret. It is in his insight in this direction that we see the esthetic tact, or fine spiritual touch of Wordsworth.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the value of poetic culture in elevating the individual, as well as educating humanity, especially in an age in which the purely scientific impulse is making such gigantic strides; and in which, according to the teaching of some of its most accomplished leaders, it is threatening to narrow the domain of poetry, until it reigns itself supreme. It is well that amongst our scientific guides we have some who (like Samuel Brown in the last generation) recognise the '*scientific uses* of the imagination.' For it may easily be shown that instead of misleading the student of nature, Imagination is the great pioneer in the discovery of her laws; and that, when inductive

research and generalization have reached their last results, Imagination has still its office, soaring above the processes of law, into that region of sublimest mystery, in which its winged power is ultimately lost. Poetry is also, in its highest types, the best counter-active to materialism. Sympathy with it, an appreciative understanding of it in its nobler forms, brings man into contact with nature's freshest life, and unwearyed processes; while it reveals the exhaustless treasures, which lie latent in the human spirit. It is thus—as it has well been called—the safety-valve of the heart. It lifts its devotees, and even its average sympathisers, into a higher atmosphere than they are wont to breathe. It calls us out of ourselves, and by bringing the vast powers of the Universe and of Humanity before our gaze, it frees us from morbid egotism. It may even help the perplexed student of nature, who sees nothing in the universe but a network of adamantine law, cold, silent and obscure, to regard it also as a Temple in which he may worship. The poet leads us into the heart of that sphere, which some physicists proclaim to be a region of impenetrable darkness; but to him it is the real *wonderland*—a region girt, it is true, at its circumference with a fringe of solemn mystery, but at its centre, radiant with the light of intelligence. The frontiers may be dim, but the shrine is luminous. It is much if the poet help to teach us that the world, in which we live, is not only a Home for present residence, and a School for transient discipline, but also a Temple for perpetual praise.

WORDSWORTH.

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN MAY, 1878, AT COCKERMOUTH, TO THE CUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE ; AND AFTERWARDS TO THE LADIES' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, AT CORK.

So much has been said about the genius and poetic mission of Wordsworth—and said so well—that I daresay some of you, who live in his birthplace, may think that the subject is exhausted. After the criticisms of Coleridge and De Quincey, of Sir Henry Taylor, of Brimley, Clough, Robertson, Lowell, Hutton, and above all of Mr. Stopford Brooke, and the present Professor of Poetry at Oxford, there seems little need to say more.

And yet, there is no possibility of exhausting Wordsworth, any more than of exhausting Plato. When the time comes for the world to believe that the last word has been said about the great idealist of antiquity, men may perhaps think that Wordsworth also is exhausted. Plato, indeed, moves in a sphere, and speaks in a dialect, that is philosophically more profound ; but he never soars into a more ethereal region. He does not interpret Nature or human Life more adequately, nor does the student of his works breathe a more untroubled air, than that in which Wordsworth lived and had his being.

In order to a just appreciation of this poet, two things are necessary. First, we must mark the growth

and development in his own mind of a new attitude towards Nature, and Man in relation to nature, as this is disclosed in his autobiographical poem, 'The Prelude,'—by far the greatest work of its kind ever contributed to literature. Secondly, we must ascertain the relation in which he stood to the poetical literature of England in the immediately preceding age, and what new elements he introduced into it, by his twofold interpretation of nature and man.

[I omit the earlier paragraphs of this Lecture, which dealt exclusively with the first of these two points—the life and individuality of the poet—as it has been often and ably unfolded: and I pass to the second of the questions raised in the preceding sentence.]

I have now to ask, What was it that Wordsworth did for literature and for the world, as no poet before him had done, and no one need attempt to do again? What, in other words, were the distinctive elements of his genius and his power, constituting him a teacher for all time? It is a large question, and one to which many lectures might be devoted.

It is to him, beyond question, that we mainly owe the nineteenth century renaissance, in the poetical literature of England. The so-called poets of the eighteenth century were simply 'men of letters.' They had various accomplishments, and great general ability; but their thoughts were expressed in *prose*, or in mere metrical diction, which, in the low ebb tide of creative imagination, passed current as poetry, without being so. Towards the close of the century, however, there was a reaction, and a quickening of mind, which took shape in many different directions. One of its most

prominent signs was a rise in the poetical temperature. This may be traced mainly to two great European influences; to the growth of modern German philosophy, and to the social and political forces that culminated in the French Revolution. In Germany, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Jean Paul, were all the products of this movement. A new way of looking both at Nature and Society had been inaugurated by Rousseau, and our insular mind—never long unaffected by the great pulse of European thought—caught the contagion, and responded sympathetically in many ways, carrying forward the stream of tendency, to new and original issues. Amongst the poets, in whom we trace the working of the new spirit, themselves influenced from very diverse quarters, were Cowper, Crabbe, and Burns. All the greater poets, though in part the product of their age, are more conspicuously its formative and inspiring spirits. In them, the intellectual and esthetic energy of a period finds one of its most characteristic expressions. And in the group of illustrious men, who created the poetical literature of England, towards the close of last century, and during the first quarter of this,—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, with many others of lesser note,—we find a sudden outcome of energy long repressed: as, in this district of yours, after a tardy Spring, one week of genial weather will sometimes liberate the imprisoned life of Nature, and cause it to burst suddenly into leaf and bloom.

Of this brotherhood of poets (which in originality and genius excelled the earlier constellation of the Elizabethan era) Wordsworth was, beyond all question, the leader. In him, the creative impulse, and the

new attitude towards nature and man, assumed features altogether unique ; and he may therefore be taken as their most prominent literary representative in England.

Accurately to measure his genius, however, either as to its positive amount or special quality, Wordsworth must be compared both with his predecessors and his contemporaries. Few things are more interesting than to contrast his work in detail with that of those earlier writers, from whom the whole new movement was a reaction, and with that of those who were borne forward along with him on the rising tide of the renaissance, bringing out succinctly the precise points of difference. Take only two.

Comparing him with Pope, you find in Wordsworth a frankness and directness, the absence of all round-about or artificial ways of dealing with and describing things. He spoke and he wrote, because he felt, and as he felt ; therefore clearly, freshly, adequately. He did not describe what all men saw, but what the majority failed to see only because their 'inward eye' had not been trained to see it. Their mind had never awakened to perceive, nor their heart to feel, the significance of the simplest things ; and so, in reading Wordsworth, many became aware for the first time that they

had faculties

Which they had never used ; that thought with them
Was in its infancy.

They felt as if a new sense had been given to them, or a power, higher than sense, had suddenly arisen from obscure and shadowy recesses. As Keats wrote, when he first looked into Chapman's Homer—

Then felt I as some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

Comparing him again with Byron, you find in Wordsworth a healthful radiance, the supreme note of naturalness. His serenity was due to a clear-eyed freshness of perception, and—what is often denied to him—his objectivity of mind. He is never morbid, or hollow, or cynical; while to those who craved excitement he had nothing to offer. As he wrote in the poem of ‘Hart-leap Well’ :—

The moving accident is not my trade,
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts;
’Tis my delight alone, in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

He could not have wailed out his own sorrows to the world in a misanthropic manner, even supposing him to have felt that ‘vanity of vanities’ was the last word of the wise, in reference to earthly good. To carry, like Byron, through Europe,

The pageant of a bleeding heart,

was impossible to Wordsworth; both, because his heart never bled like Byron’s—

the holy forms

Of young imagination kept it pure ;—

and also, because he would have scorned to parade his misery. One element in his greatness was, that with open soul he felt the spirit of the age, which took him out of himself, in the first instance to Nature. He saw that Nature had a revelation to impart which man ought, in ‘a wise passiveness’ to receive. This he perceived very early, and may be said to have

absorbed the idea within a spirit singularly pliant, and open to such influence. It gradually consolidated and matured—the form changing, but the substantial part of the idea remaining unaltered; and it became the increasing purpose of his life to proclaim it to his contemporaries, carrying it out through a long literary career, against all adverse criticism and the want of popular appreciation, and embodying the result in a series of immortal poetic creations.

It is the easiest thing in the world to criticise Wordsworth as Jeffrey did,—the acute Edinburgh lawyer, blind of one eye, who neither ‘saw life steadily nor saw it whole,’ and for whom nature contained no oracle or shrine. It is poor criticism even to say, as others have done, that Wordsworth had no humour, and no dramatic faculty; and that he, therefore, belongs to the secondary rank of genius. Humour is doubtless a great power, and Wordsworth had little or none of it. But though the sunny laughter of the humourist is a source of inexhaustible delight to men who have to face much vanity and vexation of spirit, it is intrinsically a poorer thing to resuscitate our cheerfulness by laughter, than to rouse our flagging energies by insight, and fellowship with nature. It is true that Wordsworth would have had comparatively little appreciation of the intricate culture of our age, an age that is daily growing more involved. His poetry traverses a few great lines of thought and feeling, more profoundly than any other poetry does; but its area is not wide. The complex civilisation of the nineteenth century, with its endless detail, was on the whole distasteful to him; and its best side, its redeeming side, was probably not understood. On the

other hand, the cure for the fever and fret of the nineteenth (or of any) century was well known, and profoundly grasped by him. The best antidote to the distractions of life—to the frittering away of strength, and the dissipation of energy in trifles—was understood; and by no writer, ancient or modern, has it been more nobly uttered.

It is, perhaps, useless to revive the criticisms of half a century ago, the long-buried judgments that were passed, by the guides of literary opinion in their time, on the merits of this new poet; except, in so far as they afford one of the most significant instances on record, of the powerlessness of hostile or partisan reviews to extinguish original genius, and the certainty of a reversal of their verdict by the next generation. The Edinburgh Reviewers did, on the whole, more harm than good, by their smart writing. They retarded for years the appreciation both of Wordsworth and of Coleridge, and prevented many of our fathers from coming under an influence, which would have deepened their lives and broadened their culture, whether it increased their cleverness or not. But as surely as those who lose their temper injure only themselves, all literary curses come home to roost; and the verdict of the scornful, though brilliant, essayist, dealing with a mind he cannot comprehend, is reversed in the next generation, and soon forgotten altogether.

We do not now even laugh at Jeffrey's sentence, 'This will never do,' with which the Edinburgh Polyphe-mus began his assault upon 'The Excursion;' because criticism has itself taught us that Jeffrey was incapable of appreciating one so new, original, and

great. It was his misfortune, as much as his fault. The commonplace mind (and many acute critics have very commonplace minds), however clear-sighted within its own domain, cannot take the measure of an intellect like Wordsworth's. And in this connection, it is most interesting to look back for half a century and compare the estimate formed of him by the 'Edinburgh' and the 'Quarterly' with the appreciation of Coleridge, who, during his undergraduate residence at Cambridge, and before the two men ever met, read the 'Descriptive Sketches,' and said of them, 'Seldom, if ever, was the emergence of a great and original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced.' It always requires some originality to discover the merits of an original mind; and, after all, the poets are the best critics of each other, as may be seen in Mrs Browning's 'Vision of Poets;' although, to be candid, they are sometimes also the worst, witness the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' You will remember, I dare say, Southey's reply to the Ettrick Shepherd, who had said to him, 'I suppose you have heard what a crushing review Jeffrey has given "The Excursion."'—'He crush "The Excursion!" Tell him he might as easily crush Skiddaw.'

It must be admitted that there are structural defects in the framework or ground-plan of each of Wordsworth's larger poems, and also in many of his shorter ones. It may even be natural to wish that a mind like Scott's, for example, had constructed the plot of 'The Excursion' for him, in whole or in part,—Sir Walter would have done it with so much more artistic skill. But such literary copartnery is not

possible. Supposing all initial difficulties removed, irregularities would be seen in the work, in proportion to the originality of the minds engaging in it. The respective portions would not dovetail into one another. The sutures would not fit. Then, had the plot of 'The Excursion' been prepared for Wordsworth by such a master of construction as Scott, he would not have kept to it. His idiosyncrasy would have rebelled against the suggested plan, as something that trammelled the freedom of his own mind; and he could not have woven into the more perfect framework, handed to him by Scott, that wealth of imagination which now lies within the less interesting skeleton of his own story. It is easy to see that all literary work has its blemishes, and that the most perfect, in form and substance alike, must have its *lacunæ*, which are even essential to its limited perfection. But it is not always seen, that excellence in one direction must of necessity be balanced by defect in another; and hence, that the wish to possess a perfect poem, or a perfect philosophy, or a perfect work of art, is as utopian and absurd as the longing for a perfect human being.

It is extremely easy to point out the infelicities and transitions in Wordsworth's style, its 'inconstancy,' its occasional abrupt descents to an inferior level, its sinking from ideality into matter-of-factness, its frequent prolixity, due to the poet's lingering over details and elevating secondary incidents to a primary place, and hence 'an eddying instead of a progression of thought.' But what is the use of such nimble-witted criticism *now*? It may be of use to prevent an unaccredited poet from fancying that he has secured

a place amongst the immortals, merely because he has succeeded in becoming a clever writer of verses. But when one so great, original, and rare as Wordsworth has once taken his place in that Hierarchy, where so few sit together through all time—and when that place is assured to him by the suffrage of posterity—what is the use of obtruding our petty critical estimates? Is it said to prevent those who belong to his school, and are pleased to rank as his ‘disciples,’ from a too indiscriminate eulogy? Good: an intelligible aim, and a useful end. But, surely the world has a superabundance of critics and very few original minds. We are all born critics, but how many are creators? and is it difficult to put even Shakespeare and Goethe, Plato and Aristotle, on the Procrustes bed of criticism, and stretch them curiously about? Besides, every critic has his critic; and while admiration for excellence unites men, animadversion divides them. All the above-mentioned faults in Wordsworth’s style were noticed by Coleridge long ago in his ‘*Biographia Literaria*,’ where the enumeration of blemishes is followed by one of the finest and most discriminative eulogies to be found in the annals of literature, and in which—with true prophetic insight—he says, ‘His fame belongs to another age, and can neither be accelerated nor retarded.’* This estimate of Wordsworth by his friend Coleridge is so just (and in vigour it has not been surpassed by later criticism) that I cannot do better than quote to you its chief points.

He notes ‘*First*, an austere purity of language, a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning.

* *Biographia Literaria*, p. 165. Ed. 1847.

. . . . *Second*, a corresponding weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books but from the poet's own meditative observation. They are fresh, and have the dew upon them. *Third*, the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs; the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction. *Fourth*, the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions taken immediately from nature. . . . *Fifth*, a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy, indeed, of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and image of the Creator still remain legible to him under the dark lines with which guilt or calamity had concealed or cross-barred it. In this mild and philosophic pattern, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. . . . *Last*, and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of Imagination, in the highest and strictest sense of the word. In imaginative power he stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet, in a kind, perfectly unborrowed and his own.* With this I conjoin the estimate of another acute critic, the poet Delta. Dr Moir says, 'Never, perhaps, in the whole range of literary history, from Homer downwards, did any individual, throughout the course of a long life, dedicate himself to poetry with a devotion so pure, so perfect, and so uninterrupted, as he did. It was not

* *Biographia Literaria*, pp. 161-186.

his amusement, his recreation, his mere pleasure. It was the main, the serious, the solemn business of his being. It was his morning, noon, and evening thought, the object of his out-door rambles, the subject of his in-door reflections; and, as an art, he studied it as severely as ever Canova did sculpture, or Michael Angelo painting.*

This leads me to a fresh point in the estimate of Wordsworth. It was the ambition and aim of his life to construct 'a literary work that might live;' and he first wrote his own autobiography in verse. The result was such, that he determined to compose 'a *philosophical poem*, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, to be called "The Recluse."' One part of this only—'The Excursion'—was written. 'The Prelude,' he tells us, was meant to have the same relation to 'The Recluse' as the 'ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church;' and he hoped that his minor poems, when properly arranged, would be found 'to have such a connection with the main work as might give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, or sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in these edifices.'†

In this ambition, you see the love of artistic symmetry and completion. He was not satisfied with occasional 'lyric cries,' or short swallow-flights of song. He wished to leave behind him a literary whole, gathered up into unity, and with a defined purpose from first to last, stately, with massive proportions, and manifold embellishments.

And in connection with this, note his conviction of

* The Poetical Literature of the Last Half-Century; p. 65.

† Poetical Works, vol. vi., Preface, p. 4.

the high calling of the Poet, and of his responsibility as an educator of his age. He held that the poet's function was not to descend to the level of other men but to endeavour to raise them up to his own level. As he wrote to Sir George Beaumont, from Goslar, 'The poet is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing.' The strength of resolution with which he pursued this purpose has probably had few, if any, parallels in literature. Fiercely abused, even ridiculed—not by puny assailants, but by the accredited critics of the day—he went on, with a grand tenacity of purpose, to write fresh poems, of the same character; the creative impulse welling up within him, like the waters of a perennial spring. He felt sublimely sure of the verdict of posterity. And yet, it was not his confidence that the judgment of contemporaries would be reversed that kept him loyal to his vocation; but his conviction of the inherent worth of that vocation, his belief in himself, and in the ends to which his life was devoted. His sense of the dignity of his calling, as a Poet, is the greatest in literature. He expresses it in a noble sonnet to his friend Haydon—

High is our calling, friend ! creative art
Demands the service of a mind and heart
Though sensitive, yet in their weakest part
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely muse,
While the whole world seems averse to desert, etc.

Mr Lowell thinks that his early conviction of being 'a dedicated spirit' led to 'a one-sided, as well as to an intense development of his intellectual powers; and that this was fostered by the solitude of his life,

which deprived him of any standard of proportion outside himself, by which to test the comparative value of his thoughts.' Let us grant it. But had he possessed such 'a standard' the world would probably have been deprived of much that he has given it. A 'standard of proportion' would have repressed the outflow of his genius, dwarfed his originality, and checked the free course of that stream of imaginative ardour to which we owe so many immortal creations, and so much of the scattered wealth of his poetry. We may be thankful that the greater poets have seldom had a perfect 'standard of proportion.' The rounded completeness which comes of culture would have *maimed* Wordsworth altogether.

It is refreshing to turn from the critics, and listen to the poet's own estimate of his office, and of its fulfilment in the future. He said to his nephew:—'Every poet must diffuse health and light; he must prophesy to his generation; he must teach the present age by counselling with the future; he must plead for posterity.'* To his friend, Lady Beaumont, he writes as follows of the 'Lyrical Ballads.' The quotation is a little long, but it is so excellent that I must give it in full. 'It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings of whatever rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the

* Memoir, vol. ii. p. 7.

thoughts, feelings, and images on which the life of my poems depend. The things which I have taken, whether from within or from without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage, with Mr Pitt or Mr Fox, Mr Peel or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton. . . . There neither is, nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of every twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world, amongst those who are striving to make themselves people of consideration in society. Trouble not yourself about the present reception of my poems ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ? To console the afflicted ; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous ; this is their office, which, I trust, they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. . . . Never forget what was observed by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished, he must teach the art by which he is to be known. . . . My ears are stone-deaf to their idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to their petty stings. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society wherever found ; and that they will, in their

degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.'

Again, in the same strain, to Sir George Beaumont he writes: 'Let the poet first consult his own heart, as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity—to, I hope, an improving posterity.'

No one can fail to be struck with the nobleness, I might almost say the sublimity, of these thoughts. The grandeur of dedicating life to *work* has been taught us by Carlyle in a very significant manner; but to consecrate it to thought and communion with Nature; to prolonged, devoted, wistful fellowship with her, in her ever-changeful moods, while at the time faithful to the moral ideal; this is a still grander aim, and a yet nobler achievement.

I shall not say much about Wordsworth's special theory of poetry. He believed that it takes its origin in 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' The poet, he held, should represent the incidents or scenes of real life, in which the emotions are at their natural height, or in their intensest outflow. To this, few discriminating minds can take exception. But then, he went on to say, that since at these times men naturally use a language precisely adapted to the situation, the poet ought to use the same language, modifying it only to this extent, that he must omit the disagreeable, remembering that his function is to give pleasure. Further, the metrical form into which he casts his language delights the reader or hearer, by 'the succession of pleasurable surprises' which it gives, and rhyme adds an additional delight.

Now, it is doubtless true that, if we remove all the crude phrases used by men in a state of vivid emotion,

the natural language they then employ is sometimes the choicest. But, this 'natural language' before it is fitted for the purposes of poetic expression, must pass through a further process of refining, in the alembic of the poet's own soul. The language of real life, if it be natural, spontaneous, and unconscious, very often assumes a poetic form; but the conversational style of speech, however simple and natural, could never become the sole, or the highest style for literary or artistic expression. The most animated and brilliant conversational style does not make the best literary style; and the choicest language of real life must come forth from the poetic mint—not in the hard, realistic shape in which it entered in, nor, on the other hand, artificialised by its presence there—but *recast* in a form of ideal grace, the 'naturalness' of its original form preserved, and a new adequacy imparted to it. This much may fairly be said in criticism of Wordsworth's theory, as to the language of which the poet should make use.

In the preface to the first edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads' he says that his aim was 'to ascertain how far the language and conversation of men in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure;' and, in the second edition, he describes it as 'an experiment.' His own practice was better than his theory, and in part disproved it. No doubt, he frequently carried out the latter consistently, to the verge of a bald literalism; and it was easy for the critics to hold up to ridicule the 'tub' of the blind boy, and the 'swollen ancles' of Simon Lee. But on the other hand, had Wordsworth *not* carried the realistic tendency at times too far, it may be doubted if the literary world, in his own and the next generation,

would have learned to appraise it truly. It is to be farther observed, that what his theory sanctions, and tends to, is the use, not of the language of common life, but of simple, natural, unaffected life.

Much more important than the form, however, is the subject-matter of all poetry. It has been affirmed that its essence consists in its form alone,—the form given to thought by language. This is one of the delusions against which Wordsworth's whole vocation and achievements are a protest. You hear it sometimes said vaguely, that the movement which in England began with Cowper, which Burns carried out so fully in one direction, and which Wordsworth developed to such magnificent results, was a return to *nature*, to the simplicity and truth of nature, from the artificiality and mannerism of the past. This is undoubtedly true; but it is too indefinite a statement to be of much value. The precise significance of the 'return to nature' must be ascertained. Now, you will not only find a clear natural note struck by Wordsworth, in the simple way in which he described what he saw, and was not ashamed to speak of it *as* he saw it—calling the sun, the sun, and not 'bright Phœbus,' as the eighteenth century men would have done. But, in addition to this, in selecting the subjects on which to write, he found that his predecessors had departed so far from nature, into artificial regions, and dealt so largely with conventional topics, that he had, in the first instance, to go back, in the homeliest fashion, to the most obvious facts of every-day experience. The idea of writing a poem about sheep, or daisies, seemed to the magnificent men of the Pope and Johnson era to indicate some incipient lunacy. They thought that the man was

moonstruck who could write serious verses about 'daffodils,' or 'pedlars,' or 'boats,' or 'waggoners.' Now one element in the greatness of Wordsworth was that, by 'the power of a peculiar eye,' he saw a meaning in the lowliest things of earth, and in the apparently forlorn specimens of humanity, which few other eyes in his time perceived. He did not roam over the broad earth, seeking materials for romantic narrative, and thrilling story. He asked, What is to be found at hand, if we open our eyes to see it? what meaning in nature? what significance in life? Can we not get beneath the surface of both? and apprehend, in a real and verifiable manner, the truth of that which is unfolding itself around us every day, instead of floating down the stream, chasing the shadows of excitement, or vaguely sighing for changes? Though intensely fond of travelling, he never could have said or felt, with Goethe,

To make room for wandering was it
That the world was made so wide.

On the contrary, within the circle of his own mountains, and among the simple unconventional dalesmen of the north he sought for a deeper meaning, underlying the commonplaces of life and nature. To Wordsworth, the 'open secret' lay at the heart of the most familiar, lowly, and even common things. The humblest object in nature, if approached with reverence, the most trivial task in life, if discharged with dignity, was at once transfigured, and lit up with ideal grace in the light of that transfiguration.

But how are we to see this latent significance in common things, this worth within the trivial and the familiar? The difficulty is a most real and serious

one to many. Wordsworth's answer is substantially this—It is by the opening of the inward eye. There is no veil on the face of Nature, needing to be removed: the film is on the human eye. We do not see what is everywhere around us to be seen, because our organ of vision is impaired; and the malady is, to a great extent, hereditary. But the recovery of the power of sight—that second sight, which divines the secrets inaccessible to the material organ—is effected by simple contact with Nature herself; not by the secondary study of her through books, through literature, or through science, but by familiarity with her face to face, in the ever-fresh and renovating processes incessantly at work around us.

If we are to reach the secret of Wordsworth, however, and find his 'healing power,' we must apprehend something more about 'it, even than this. There are one or two preliminary things to be noticed. Those of you who have made his acquaintance at all, will not have failed to note the accuracy of his local allusions, the rigid fidelity of his descriptions. They are not photographs: they are far better. They are *divinations* of the spirit of the places he describes. His topographical allusions are so numerous and minute that some have felt them to be wearisome; but there is no spot in all your district, to which he has referred, which he has not *interpreted*, illumining it with

The light that never was, on sea or land.

It is this element of local colour in his poems, that has made the whole region of the English Lakes pre-eminently classic ground. There is no place in Scotland associated with the genius of Burns or of Scott—

Ayrshire, Tweedside, Loch Katrine, or the Western Isles—over which the ethereal light of imagination still broods, as it lingers amongst the hills and dales of Cumberland and Westmoreland. And if the remark of Mr Lowell, that the poet was ‘the historian of Wordsworthshire,’ has any force, it is part of his imperishable renown that he *created such a shire*, and gave it a meaning vastly more interesting than those geographical county boundaries, to which the poet’s work as stamp-collector was confined.


Wordsworth possessed, first of all, a wide knowledge of nature; a knowledge that was broad, intimate, minute, and thorough. Hence the perfect truth of his description of the external aspects of a scene, before he sought its inner meaning, or ‘its soul.’ Without such accuracy of perception and report, no divination was possible. He was unerring in the fidelity with which he observed the minute features of nature, which other eyes failed to see. One day some one told him that he (Wordsworth) had written a poem upon a daisy. ‘No,’ said the poet indignantly, ‘it was on *the* daisy, a very different thing!’ He had unusually fine physical senses; and, with rapid intuition, he pierced beyond the reports they brought him, of form, colour, sound, etc., that he might discern the underlying suggestions, with which the scene was charged. His special greatness, as an interpreter of Nature, lay in his power of divining the *genius loci*,—that subtle arrowy glance going direct to the very core, always adequate, and usually profound, often tenderly human; in every instance bringing back some secret, and disclosing the immeasurable significance of common things. He was never contented

with deciphering outward features. Forms, colours, sounds, always led up to some

Remoter charm
Unborrowed from the eye,

or ear. Nature's face was full of *expression* : and this expression revealed *character*, as truly as a human face reveals the workings of emotion in a human soul. Other poets were content simply to chronicle natural phenomena, as beautiful, or grand, picturesque, or sublime. Wordsworth always asked, What is the meaning of Nature, in those places where she has concentrated her expressiveness, and in those moods in which she seems to be unburdening herself to man ? What is the secret of the glory of the sky, at sunrise or sunset ? and their difference ? What is the meaning of the motions and balancings of the clouds ? of the alternate wail and sigh of either wind or ocean ? Or, if he did not *ask* these questions, he answered them without asking. All that is distinctive in his poetry, grows out of the belief that Nature's soul has a definite expression, whether in rock or flower, in tree or stream, and can be recognised. It can appeal to us, and mould us. In each natural object, some 'invisible thing' is 'clearly seen.' Wordsworth, in short, had a strong, intuitive grasp of that subtle spirit of the Beautiful, which breathes throughout the whole framework of nature, emanating from, and expressing itself in, the life of every material thing.

But it is important to go, if possible, a little deeper down, and see to what this distinctive feature amounted ; because we hear it constantly reiterated—and with vague inaccuracy affirmed—that Wordsworth was a *subjective poet*, that he thrust himself into the



scene he described, and saw his own individuality (nay his own idiosyncrasies) mirrored in Nature. Nothing could be more erroneous; nothing less exact. It is both an utterly irrelevant, and a totally ignorant criticism. It is irrelevant, because I suppose it is not possible for a poet, any more than for a critic, to escape from his own shadow. It is ignorant, because Wordsworth's subjectivity is not greater than, it is not nearly as great as, that of his contemporaries,—Scott only excepted. Byron's heroes, for example, are more Byronic, than Wordsworth's are Wordsworthian. It is one of the most foolish and futile of charges, either that he was imprisoned within the circle of his own subjective broodings about Nature, or that his characters were the mere duplicates of himself. Not only was 'the mind of man' (as he says)

The haunt and the main region of my song;

but Nature was nothing to him apart from man. Still further, it was man as social, man in relation to his fellows, man organised in society, that chiefly interested him.


The charge of throwing his own subjectivity into Nature, and 'seeing himself in all he saw,' is so foolish that it is difficult to deal with it. He saw a life in Nature distinct from his own, yet kindred to it, a reciprocal and complementary life. You may say, if you choose, that *imagination* enabled him to do this; and that, without imagination, he could not have been brought into such a living *rapprochement* with Nature, as certainly, without it, he never could have chronicled the things he saw. But imagination gives insight, as well as creative power; and insight must in all cases

go before creation, if the latter is worth anything. Poetic creation is simply the embodiment in an imaginative form, or in an intellectual and esthetic shape, of what has previously been discerned or divined. Now Wordsworth's very speciality as a poet lay in this, that he interpreted the universe in terms of humanity, *without* throwing over it the mantle of his own subjectivity. He read its secret, by the use of his own faculties of course, and with the aid of the 'auxiliary light' which 'came from his mind,' but not by a process of mere idealisation. He saw Nature through his own lens—less he could not do without ceasing to be a poet, or even a man. But he did more than this. He saw into Nature's innermost heart, and was throughout and pre-eminently, a seer, and not an idealiser. He perceived that the universe is animated by a living and recognisable soul; that we do not err in describing it as, at least, quasi-human: and conversely, he not only desired to bring humanity into vital contact with the sunshine of the broad world, and to

Feed it, 'mid nature's old felicities ;

but he saw that human life finds its deepest interpretation, in direct relation to nature. Thus Nature reveals man, while Man mirrors nature.

Not only so: not only was Nature, according to Wordsworth, instinct with personality (or what resembled it), but the spirit or soul of nature, animating and informing it everywhere, was recognisable and realisable in detail. It was not always, nor indeed usually recognisable, as one all-comprehending Force: but to our vision, it was divided into many separate forms and phases. Each single object, every flower, every mountain, every star, had its spiritual essence or



informing soul, which was vitally related to the larger soul of the world, the poet could not tell how. It was for the speculative philosopher to say,—if he could,—what were the relations between the separate objects, and the universe as a whole. The poet might occasionally refer to the underlying unity, which he realised as vividly as the philosopher, or more so. But his special function was to interpret the detail, or the specialisation of nature; its variety rather than its unity.

Thus the soul of nature, localised here and there—just as humanity is individualised in separate men and women—has, to the poet, its own peculiar life and changing moods. Not only has each mountain or stream its *genius loci*; but that genius is fully as changeful as man—now bright and radiant, again depressed and dull. It is alternately glad and festive, mourning and bereaved. Nature is seen toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing, just as we toil, rejoice, and sorrow. And this is not the polytheistic notion of separate beings, as tutelary gods, oreads, dryads, &c., inhabiting distinct localities. These were detached from nature, spirits that came and went, and were as capricious in their comings and goings, as fairies are alleged to be. But there is a wide interval between a belief in ghosts and fairies, and a recognition of those ‘souls of lonely places,’ or the ‘spirit of the woods,’ mountains and floods, of which Wordsworth speaks. In the latter case, the inner spirit of the Universe is recognised, revealing itself to us, in this way, as the breathing life of the place—a portion of the infinite Existence, not really cut off from the rest, but only seeming to be so, to our finite imagination. The link connecting part with part may be too subtle for us to

trace, but it exists, and is felt to exist, at the very moment when our perception of difference in the parts is keenest.

Thus 'the mighty being' of Nature, ever 'awake,'* manifests itself incessantly and simultaneously, in a hundred different ways, all over the world; its diversity not destroying its unity, nor its unity abolishing its diversity. It is too vast for human realisation as a whole. In virtue, however, of its apparent divisions, its dismemberment to the human eye—assuming, as it does, an immense variety of phases—it can be realised in detail; and, in fellowship with any one of the details, the soul of man has unquestionable fellowship with the very essence of nature. Each of these, when apprehended by us, awakens a kindred or correspondent state of feeling, while the conviction of the profound unity of the whole remains unshaken. The highest life of each separate object having thus an interior relation to the life of every other, there is reciprocity amongst them all, a never-ceasing intercommunion, as the common element ebbs and flows throughout them. This is admirably expressed by Mr Stopford Brooke. He says:—

'This idea is the loveliest of all which Wordsworth has introduced into English poetry, and it flowed from his conception of everything in nature having its own peculiar life. . . . There was ceaseless intercommunion founded on the unutterable love which flowed through all things, and with which everything acted on every other. The whole world was linked together; every part, every element, gave and received, honoured and did service, to each other. . . . And they delight in social intercourse, like friends who love each other—there is no jar, no

* Miscellaneous Sonnets, part i. Sonnet 30 (vol. ii. p. 275).

jealousy, no envy there—their best joy is in being kind to one another.’ *

And better illustrations of this idea than those which Mr Brooke has selected from the poems could not be chosen:—

Through all her depth, St Mary’s Lake
Is visibly delighted,
For not a feature of the hills
Is in that mirror slighted.

Or again—

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

.

Love, now an universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth,
It is the hour of feeling.

It must be observed, however, that the perception of this feature in the life of Nature—its semi-human characteristic—and the intercommunion and reciprocity to which it gives rise, is not possible at all times. It is only perceived when certain subjective states of the percipient mind correspond with special objective conditions in Nature itself. When these conditions are realised, material forms seem but the raiment of a life beneath them, which alone is real. As this life is not discerned by us equally in every object, but only in some, so it is not apprehended every moment, but only occasionally. If an apoca-

* Theology in the English Poets, p. 107.

lypse were constant, it would be like the sunrise, and cease to be an apocalypse; just as a constant discernment of the underlying unity of things would prevent us from recognising the diversity which plays upon the surface. But when our faculties are at their keenest stretch, and when our external conditions and surroundings are favourable—as, when on the high hill tops, or under the clear vault of the sky on a still and luminous night, or by the shore of the everlasting sea—the veil is at its thinnest; and the conviction is flashed upon us, that the life of Nature is fundamentally kindred to our own. The persuasion that Nature desires our fellowship is then no fancy, but an intuition of the heart and the intellect and the esthetic sense combined. For example, if you gaze into the heart of some tenderly beautiful flower as it looks up from the moorland to the sky, or listen to the sound of running waters on a far-off mountain side, or watch the radiance of the clouds that gather round the setting sun, does the sense of *solitude* deepen, or does the feeling of a latent bond and hidden social unity survive? Is the prevailing thought that of the coldness, and silence, and unrecognisableness of nature, or of its kindredness, its affinity, and its friendship? Whatever it may be with the *laws* of nature—whether they do or do not correspond, as Mr Hinton put it, to the habits of a friend—the *life* of nature (of which the laws are the expression) is a continual revelation of *character*; unfolding itself, now more clearly, and again more dimly, as the clouds break or gather upon its face, and as the eye of the beholder is fresher or duller in its perceptions.

I need scarcely guard myself against mistake, by

adding that it is easy to carry this notion of kindredness *too far*, and thus to degrade it altogether. If we do not recognise the transcendant unlikeness of nature to man, along with the likeness which exists, the latter idea is more than vulgarised. It becomes distorted and untrue. Only through the recognition of the former notion does the latter gain in reality and grandeur. We do not need, however, to be reminded of the difference so much as of the resemblance. The former idea always takes care of itself. It is constantly suggested, and sometimes painfully obtrusive: the latter is occasionally grasped, is often dimly possessed, and is always fugitive. Too soon the curtain falls, the glory fades; and after every disclosure of Nature's heart, in the most lovely of its apparitions, we are again in the presence of the old grey skies, the silent and the seemingly unresponsive heaven. But the two feelings, whether major or minor, whether for the time in the foreground or the background of consciousness, are complementary ones. They are, indeed, but the two sides of the knowableness and the unknowableness of the Infinite.

Our inability to look on nature as Wordsworth did, is as often due to our artificiality as to our shallowness. If nature is to continue to subdue, to teach and to mould, as well as to fascinate us, we must retain the heart of childhood, with its natural wonder, delight, admiration, and reverence—let the intellect develop as it may. In a 'wise passiveness' we must receive her sweet influences from without. She will not yield up her secret to us when we are being whirled along on the surface of life's stream, absorbed, and excited by artificial things, or magnetised by any secondary

interest. This was nobly taught by Wordsworth in the sonnet beginning—

The world is too much with us. Late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in nature that is ours.

There is a most intimate relation between Wordsworth's moral elevation and his intellectual insight. The artificiality and mannerism, the haste and distraction, of our modern life, with its many prolix ceremonies, prevents the simple harmony of the mind with Nature, in which all natural poetry is born. Furthermore, the marriage of the soul with nature is a union of equals; and its result is a realisation of that other or higher self, our *alter ego* in nature, not (as I have already said) as an idealisation of the mind, but as a reality of mental vision. Transcending all subjective bonds, we enter a region 'where time and space are not'—a world of higher apperception, in which the unity of self and not-self, of the mind within and the universe without, is clearly understood—while neither the one nor the other is overborne, but their fundamental separateness preserved.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon another feature kindred to this, in the teaching of Wordsworth. It is Nature's office to cure us of morbidity and melancholy, as well as of artificiality; its healing and restoring function calming us, reanimating and reassuring us. He shows, as few teachers have shown, that while full of sympathy with us, Nature will not abide our sadnesses. She feels them to be an intrusion on her peace, her immense latent life, out of which all that allays them proceeds. Our introspectiveness and self-consciousness are rebuked by Nature, whenever we are

alone with her, and open to her influences ; and it is as necessary that these should be taken out of us, as the conceit that we have fathomed her ways and processes of work. She reveals an impersonal Order as well as a personal power, a transcendent and utterly mysterious life, with which we may not presume to be too familiar ; and it is merely this side that is turned towards us,—the seemingly stony and unresponsive side,—when we complain of her mysteriousness. But who will say, that, in this, she does not educate us also ?

In the same connection, I claim for Wordsworth a clear knowledge of the profoundest problems, with which the human mind has grappled, from Heraclitus to Immanuel Kant.* He seems to have penetrated to the very core of philosophical ideas, not by laboured argumentation, but by intuitive discernment—both intellectual and moral—which began early and developed rapidly, keeping pace with the growth of his imagination. By that consummate vision, which is superior to all processes of reasoning, he reached the ultimate data of speculative Philosophy and Theology.

Further, in dealing with the perennial problems, Wordsworth almost always keeps to their elements. He therefore moves within a verifiable region ; and hence his treatment of the questions cannot be super-

* It is for this reason that a knowledge of Wordsworth is one of the very best introductions to the Platonic (or any other) Philosophy. There are numerous passages in 'The Prelude' and 'The Excursion,' as well as in the minor poems, which condense within them the essence of the great ideal systems of Plato, Spinoza, and Kant. Many a single line of Wordsworth's contains a precise and singularly felicitous embodiment of the philosophical ideas which lie at the heart of these systems.

seded. His poetry is intrinsically durable ; not only because—like all poetry of the first magnitude—it is a joy to the human race for ever ; but also because it has no mythological elements, which Science may some day compel us to lay aside. He carries us into a region altogether unaffected by the discoveries, which imperil a merely traditional faith. Let Science march forward as it may, and where it may, Wordsworth's poetry moves in a sphere unaffected by its conclusions, a sphere indeed to which its widest generalisations bear witness, and pay tribute.

And this leads me to speak of the bracing effect, the moral tonic, to be found in his poetry. It presents a high ideal of life, elevated alike above the sordid and the capricious, above the trivial, the artificial and the ignoble. Hence there is no *ennui*, no *tedium vitæ*, in Wordsworth. Every one knows his reference in the sonnet to 'plain living and high thinking : ' but few have adequately realised the immense serenity, the large divine tranquillity, and the indefinite hopefulness, that breathe through all his writings. In him, aspiration blends with contentment ; placidity and calm, with effort to be other than we are, and with a belief in the endless possibilities of human nature. This is the secret of what Mr Arnold has so happily called his 'healing power.' You feel it, just as you feel the effect of mountain air after languishing in a city. The 'strength of the hills' is in almost everything he wrote. And there is no influence so good and gracious as Wordsworth's, so directly *sanative*, to those who have felt a relaxation of fibre, from long pondering the 'riddle of the painful earth,' or brooding over the antinomies of our intellectual and moral nature. There

is a well-known sense of hopelessness, when one is beaten down before the mysteries of the universe, if these have been wrestled with and found insoluble, and a feeling of languor and indifference—the *cui bono* feeling—is incipient. To one, in such a mood of apathy or life-weariness, the influence of Wordsworth is incomparable. His poetry is a moral tonic, re-invigorating the heart, by taking it straight away to some fresh natural well of feeling, or of thought. Great as he is, therefore, as a poet, I consider him still greater as a moralist. His sense of the infinite moral unity of which we are but parts, and his conviction of a

Central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation,

are as guide-posts in ethics. In the forest paths of human life, with their labyrinthine windings, or, when out in the open, crossways meet and perplexity is inevitable, he, of all poets, best helps you to know where you are, what direction to take, and how to travel forward with serenity, and even with joy. If his teaching—as embodied, for example, in the ‘Ode to Duty,’ or in the chapter of ‘The Excursion’ entitled ‘Despondency Corrected,’—is inconsistent with a Goethean sweep and universality, delighting in all things with frank objectivity, simply *because they are*, its narrowness is the narrowness of one who has a root in himself, of one who has found

Within himself a measure and a rule.

And one, thus taught and disciplined, will ‘live and breathe,’ as he says—

For noble purposes of mind ; his heart
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days ;
His eye distinguishes, his heart creates.

In all that I have said, I have been giving you the merest introduction to the poetry and poetic mission of Wordsworth. Those of you who have not yet begun the earnest study of this poet—and he requires not only to be read but to be studied—may consult, along with the poems themselves, two discussions, which, amongst the large literature that has now accumulated on the subject, are, in my judgment, by far the most thorough and satisfactory:—I refer to Principal Shairp's 'Essay on Wordsworth,' originally contributed to the *North British Review*, and republished in his 'Studies in Poetry and Philosophy;' and Mr Stopford Brooke's volume, entitled 'Theology in the English Poets.' The former is more condensed and finished as a work of art; the latter is more detailed in its analysis, and almost exhaustive in one direction.

Before closing, I merely add, as I have already hinted more than once, that there is no poet after Shakespeare more worthy of prolonged, careful, and even reverential study, and especially of study by women. There is none whose influence on character is more ennobling, and from contact with whose spirit you can draw a serener inspiration. And though our poetical literature is now becoming more complex, and many a kindred spirit has embodied fresh forms of Imagination in the raiment of our English speech, since Wordsworth breathed his last at Rydal Mount, he remains one of those

Stars pre-eminent in magnitude
Which, from the zenith, dart their beams,

of which he spoke; and he has deeper things to teach us, in our nineteenth century haste and high pressure,

than any of his co-mates, who are seated along with him, on the imperial height.

It may be as difficult for some to get within his circle, as it is for others to understand Beethoven or Fra Angelico. Nevertheless, his is an 'open secret,' and as he said of Burns,

In busiest street, and loneliest glen,
Are felt the flashes of his pen.
He rules 'mid winter snows, and where
Bees fill their hives.
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

And sure I am that long as the streams of Westmoreland sing their songs of peace 'with quiet blending,' long as Helvellyn rears its head above the neighbouring hills, and the sunlight and the moonlight come and go amongst the mountains, the radiance of this Poet's genius will shed a more ethereal light over the whole district, and will disclose the inmost soul of Nature, and the boundless significance of Life, to the English generations of the future.

He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round ;
He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us, and we had ease ;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sunlit fields again ;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned ; for there was shed,
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely fur'd,
The freshness of the early world.

THE ETHICS OF CREED-SUBSCRIPTION.

(*The Contemporary Review*, August 1872.)

It is universally felt among reflecting men, that in proportion to the growth of a cultivated reason, the dogmatic standards of the past become less and less adequate, as charts of human belief. And there is noticeable at present, here and there throughout Christendom, a desire to recast and to simplify the theological creeds; to retrench their details, on those matters on which the mediæval and renaissance theology alike rashly dogmatized, and to revert to the facts of history as the basis of belief. It is the constitutional duty of the Church to revise its creed; but, whether from the *vis inertiae* of human nature, and the tendency to endure what time has tolerated long, or from the fear of ulterior consequences arising out of the process of revision, and a willingness rather to

bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of,

this duty is never discharged, till some crisis is reached, grave enough to necessitate it.

We may anticipate much discussion throughout Christendom in future years as to the fittest form which the articles of the Catholic faith should assume. There is a question, however, much more important than the re-arrangement of any theological document, the wise settlement of which may lessen much of the

heat of religious controversy over disputable points. It is the relation in which the subscriber, who signs any public standard of belief as the confession of his faith, stands to that document; or the attitude (intellectual and moral) in which assent or conformity to a creed places the man who assents; in brief, *the ethics of subscription*.

In discussing this subject, we assume at the outset as indisputable, that all creeds are only approximations to an adequate statement of Truth. A creed is the intellectual expression of those facts or principles, which belong to the spiritual order of things. It is the product of the systematizing intellect, which endeavours to arrange in symmetrical order, and to present in logical coherence, the data of religious knowledge and faith. But the very necessity for a creed at all arises from the imperfection of the human mind, and its inability to retain these data as a whole, without the help of some framework which binds them into unity. The truths with which the creed deals are not only immeasurably greater than the form which encloses them; they are in their very nature transcendent realities, which no creed could ever adequately formulate. The nature of God, and of the human soul, with the relations which subsist between them, are themes which the intellectual grasp of no one man, or set of men associated in council, could ever exhaustively analyse. And yet, it is this immeasurable transcendency of the subject-matter, which has in one sense given rise to the various theological formulæ. The scientific schools do not construct creeds, in part because their subject-matter is less disputable, but also in part because science deals

not with the transcendent, but with the phenomenal. It is the glory of Theology that it deals with the transcendent; but, on that very account, its creeds are at once a necessity, and an imperfection. We assume, therefore, from the limitations of human thought, and the essential inadequacy of all intellectual forms to express ultimately mysterious truth, as well as from the poverty of those verbal frameworks in which we express our intellectual concepts, that it is absolutely impossible ever to have a perfect creed. It is perhaps natural for the Church to desire it, but its attainment is a utopian dream. Our choice is between a form more or less accurate and expressive, to the individual who uses it, and the Church which adopts it.

Secondly, while all forms are ultimately inadequate, it is impossible for the same form equally to satisfy every mind within the Church, or even within a very limited section of it. So long as men differ in the original structure and balance of their powers, their attitude towards Truth must vary; and in proportion to their growth (in other words, to the development of their intellectual life) differences of opinion will inevitably increase, along with the increase of their unity. It is a common delusion, that in proportion as the minds of men approximate to Truth, they must necessarily approximate to each other. Their unity will doubtless be fostered; and, on many questions of intellectual and moral apprehension, their opinions will coincide. But it is neither possible nor desirable for them to contemplate Truth from points of view absolutely identical. Their diversity will and ought to remain, and to grow, alongside of their unity. This, then, is another primary position from which we start.

Uniformity of opinion among thinking men (whether within or without the Church) is unattainable and undesirable. It is simply stagnation and death. Life always differentiates or diversifies. Increase the life, and you do not tend to intellectual sameness, but to difference ; and the greater our speculative divergence, the more intense our life. In a club of intelligent men, no one would desire an echo of his own opinion all round the circle of its membership. Were it so, the life of the club would cease, and it would speedily and deservedly be extinguished. So also in the Church. If a number of men agree to unite together under a common symbol, it is impossible for them honestly to do so on the theory of an absolute identity of belief. They must do so with an esoteric understanding that the formula they mutually adopt is only partially valid, an approximate or tentative statement, essentially inadequate. There is thus a certain self-abandonment in the act of subscription, a sacrifice of the individual for the common weal, without, however, surrendering his right to carry on continuous and independent thought. Rational sympathy with our fellow-men, with whom we must be associated in some way or other, whether as thinkers or worshippers or workers, leads to this self-abandonment in subscription. If the members of a Church refuse to sign a document as the confession of their faith, until they discover or construct a form which corresponds in all details to their own ideal, they will not only wait till Doomsday—supposing their search to be thorough-going—but they will also inevitably cut themselves off from their brethren ; they will isolate and leave themselves out in the cold, beyond all existing ecclesiastical enclosures. In short,

there is a certain *vicarious* element in all healthy creed-subscription. We assent to it as a common symbol, not only as our own confession, but also as that of the community or religious organization with which we are associated. In other words, it is framed *in the plural*, not in the singular.

In the third place, it is impossible for the same intellectual form to continue to satisfy the Church from age to age : and, in most instances, to continue adequate to the individual, during a lifetime—*i. e.*, provided he continues to grow mentally and morally. Suppose a creed to have been constructed in the first century of the Christian era, and then made as perfect as the limits of human frailty allowed. As time rolled on, it would inevitably become obsolete in practical use and application. Not that it would cease to be of the highest historic value, and the greatest practical use, not that it would cease to be an expression of truth ; but it would infallibly become an *inadequate* expression of it. A creed, which is a few centuries old, of necessity becomes obsolete in form. It is not like wine, which improves with age. It appeals to the new generation as a dead unspoken language does. Neither is it desirable that the creeds bequeathed from the past should be adequate expressions of the advancing thought and insight to which each new age attains. It would not only be an anachronism if the beliefs of earlier centuries were thus prospectively adequate ; but the form which was more perfect for the future, would be less perfect for the era in which it first appeared. And its very perfection would arrest theological inquiry, and prevent the unabated study of those problems with which all the creeds are alike concerned.

Thus, what many would regard as an ideal creed, a brief statement of simple facts, purged of dialectic, composed of what artists call 'neutral tints,' if adopted, on that account, as absolute and final, instead of being a benefit to the future, would fetter research, and obstruct the progress of theological thought. Several of the creeds which exist assuredly contain some hard and gritty propositions, the legacy of mediæval theology; but no wise man despises them on that account. He finds in each, on the contrary, some aspect of Truth which others present less perfectly, while none exhausts the whole.

Take even the most barbaric form, into which the traditions of the past have crystallized themselves, a creed which was the product of a rough warlike time, written, as some one has said, 'as if it were a despatch from a battlefield, the heated manifesto of a victorious faction.' Grant that it was framed at a time when there was a passion for system, as such,—when theologians undertook to explain everything, and could scarcely believe that there were any divine riddles in the universe, which it was impossible for man to solve,—we cannot say that the subsequent developments of theological thought would have taken place, had not the way been prepared for them by the existence of such a system. As it is impossible for any one who has reached and who breathes a freer air of thought, to say how much he is indebted for it to his earlier nurture in opinions which he has learned to discard; so with generations; so with Churches. They are beholden for their subsequent freedom, to the very creeds, whose fetters they have shaken of.

We may appeal to individual experience, for evidence

of the fact that a final standard of belief is quite unattainable. Suppose any truth-seeker to note down, in due propositional order, what he believes at a certain age. If he lives and pursues his researches, his opinions must inevitably change. Have not the majority of those now 'in orders,' in the several Churches, outgrown those views which seemed to them almost final, when they left the university, and entered the profession of the ministry? If it be so with the individual, *a fortiori*, with an associated company of men, united together in a Church. As the intellectual area enlarges, the probabilities of mental divergence increase. The more numerous and competent the seekers after truth, the more varied their points of view, and the more diverse the conclusions at which they arrive. It may be farther asserted that it is morally illegitimate in any one to subscribe a document as the *final* expression of his faith; *or to feel towards any creed whatsoever that it is, or that he would like it to be, ultimate*. He is not only foolish, he is to blame, if he binds himself never to think otherwise than he does at the time of subscription.* It would be an immoral vow, and tantamount to intellectual suicide; besides being a vow impossible to fulfil. He might just as well bind himself, as the late Bishop of Norwich has well said, 'never to grow taller or thinner.' And practically no one ever does so. Even the most unenlightened sub-

* It is a noteworthy circumstance that the Free Church of Scotland, in revising the questions to be put to its ministers at ordination, has modified those which are put to the clergy of the Establishment in one important respect. At the close of the fourth question, the promise to believe 'for all the days of your life' is omitted.

scriber, who may be half consciously an infallibilist, will always tell you that he has not bound himself to ignore fresh critical enquiry. In theory then, all who subscribe creeds hold that their act of subscription does not foreclose enquiry, and that it is in the power of the Church at any time to alter and re-adjust its creed, when fresh light is obtained. But with the majority this is a perfectly barren admission. It is always barren, so long as the fresh light is neither looked for, nor discerned when it shines.

The question has another aspect equally important, viz., this: How far is one who, in the course of theological enquiry, has come to entertain opinions different from the majority of his co-religionists, bound to avow these differences? and how far is he at liberty to maintain an esoteric doctrine of his own? This part of the subject is of immense importance in our time. In discussing it we must endeavour to avoid 'the falsehood of extremes.'*

Manifestly, no one can consistently maintain that all men are bound to give public expression to every divergence in opinion from their brethren. To do so, would turn ecclesiastical gatherings into arenas of perpetual conflict, and religious conferences into theological bear-gardens. Besides, it would deflect the enquirer from the main purpose of his research, were he bound in the end to make a public declaration of the results of his enquiry. It would neutralise the more silent processes of personal growth, and the

* It has been ably discussed from one point of view by Mr Henry Sidgwick, in a pamphlet entitled 'The Ethics of Conformity and Subscription,' published by Messrs Williams & Norgate, 1870; and, from another, by the late Bishop of Norwich, in the first of his papers on 'Free Discussion of Religious Topics.'

gradual ripening of conviction. We are never bound to wear our opinions on our sleeve ; or to proclaim aloud, as from the housetop, how far we differ from other men. That may be the ideal of those who glory in 'the dissidence of dissent, and the protestantism of the protestant religion ;' but there is neither 'sweetness, nor light' in it. We are no more called to announce to all and sundry how far we agree and how far we differ from them, than it is our duty to be inquisitive about our neighbour's faith, and with vulgar curiosity or selfishness to strive to be his conscience keeper. Such procedure would engender a miserable egoism, and the ceaseless obtrusion of our idiosyncracies, it might be our singularities, upon the notice of others. It is true that no one is at liberty to cloak or conceal his opinions, from indolent acquiescence, or from a desire for 'peace at any price.' But it is enough if he lets his convictions find utterance, when it is spontaneous and natural to do so ; or when Truth would be compromised by silence or by reticence—a very different thing from obtruding his ideas, or courting inopportune discussion.

It is practically impossible, then—as everyone with moral perception will at once allow—for a man to leave a Church on the ground of doctrinal divergence, as easily as he would leave a political society, when he objected to any of its superannuated rules :—

'Feelings,' says Mr Sidgwick, 'that everyone must respect, make it impossible for a man voluntarily to abandon a Church as easily as he would withdraw from a scientific or philanthropic association. The ties that bind him to it are so much more intimate and sacred that their severance is proportionately more

painful. The close relations of kinship and friendship in which he may stand to individual members of the congregation present an obstacle to severance which all in practice recognise, if not in theory ; but even to the community itself, and its worship, he is still bound by the strong bands of hereditary affection, ancient habit, and possibly religious sympathies outliving doctrinal agreement.'

It will be admitted that religious affinities are deeper than any theoretical divergences can be ; and that ties, such as those to which Mr Sidgwick refers, which are the result of years of sacred labour amongst one's fellow-men, cannot be abruptly severed. The man who would break them, on the ground of mere intellectual divergence would be really a very weak man, morally obtuse, and devoid of all healthy perceptions of duty, instead of the courageous and honest individual, which some of those who are jealous about uniformity of doctrine, would make him out to be.

It will be replied, all these ties are trifles compared with the duty of veracity in subscription, and of loyalty to the great dogmas which are held by the man's co-religionists. But suppose the dogma, which the Church regards as fundamental, is not so regarded by the individual in question ? The Church cannot force him to think it fundamental, if to his own mind it is subsidiary. Nor can it expect a man to excommunicate himself, or to adopt a standard of public virtue which is to his mind morally unsound ; and to bring his work (presumably fruitful) to a sudden end, simply because his brethren think that it would be an act of magnanimous virtue and of high-principled honesty to do so. It is well that the responsibility of excommunication lies with the collective Church, and that the duty of leaving it does not rest with the

individual. Let him remain, then, wherever he finds a sphere of usefulness and modest labour, and continue at his work, despite his differences from his brethren, until they exclude him from their company.

We may further observe, that were the Church to reckon it a public duty in all its office-bearers at once to proclaim their slightest dissent from its standards, and to leave the old enclosures in consequence of them, it would be rapidly impoverished, if not destroyed. None of those who desire uniformity in opinion profess a wish to arrest the progress of free inquiry, and thorough-going research as to the origin of Christianity and the nature of Christian doctrine. They all hold it to be the theologian's duty evermore to pursue Truth with passionate ardour, not considering that he, or his fathers, 'have already attained, or are already perfect.' Well, he occupies meanwhile a certain position in his Church, where he wields certain influences, as well as discharges certain duties. Is it to be supposed that he is bound, on the first discovery of an intellectual difference between his own views and those of his brethren, to withdraw from their society, to bring his labours amongst them to a close, while he searches for a new field for the fruitful employment of his powers? It is folly to assert it. For the process would be an endless one. If he is in search of an ideal Church, with an ideal creed, he will find none upon the earth; and he will be, like the knights-errant in quest of the Holy Grail, a fruitless traveller over the world, a theological wanderer to the ends of it. He will be perpetually 'arising and departing' out of this, that, and the other religious organization, feeling that they were 'not his rest.' What then? Let

him remain where he is, and not obtrude his singularities. Let him associate with, and learn from his brethren, who differ most widely from himself; and if anything theological 'be revealed to him that sitteth by, let him hold his peace, that all may learn, and that all may be edified.'

Again, we ask if it is possible for the theological inquirer to pursue his researches with absolute candour, when he knows that as soon as he deflects by one or two degrees from the faith of his brethren, he must forsake their company, revoke his subscription to the common creed, or be reckoned dishonest in his conformity to it. By the adoption of what may be called a rigorous *literalism* in the ethics of subscription, there is always a premium on conformity, and a bribe against enquiry. Nor is it necessary that one who desires a less stringent formula of subscription should be the special advocate of 'Free-thought' as against 'Authority.' The plea of many modern Liberals who boast of their emancipation from all the fetters of authority is frequently as narrow and illiberal, as it is loud, fussy, and vulgar. But we ask, on the other hand, how an inquirer who is candid, conscientious, free from bias, and intent on the discovery of truth, *can* pursue his researches with a single eye and an untrammelled heart, if he has this alternative always before him—Conform, or resign; assent to the old creed absolutely, or leave the goodly fellowship of your co-religionists? And while it is only the ignorant, the stolid, or the worldly-minded who are able to go on in the routine of past convictions, the moral and spiritual value of intellectual changes in belief is, I think, not sufficiently recognized. It is indeed hardly

recognized at all in the modern Church. Hence the need for reiterating what is to thoughtful men a truism: that change of intellectual position is the sign or synonym of intellectual health. We progress only as we change. Therefore the more change the better, provided it be a movement forward, and not a slipping backward. One generation cannot tie up succeeding generations to its decisions; and some progress has surely been made, since the latest settlement of the Articles of Religion, by the youngest section of the Church, which has attempted to draw them up. But in all these Articles we have merely a series of decisions, by fallible though intelligent men, open to modification by their successors; and every such modification must begin, as has been frequently remarked, from *within the Church itself*. It cannot be done by outsiders. The Church will not (perhaps to its own loss) listen to the voice of reformers who stand outside its pale. Jealous enough of innovators within, she is usually more jealous of physicians without, whose diagnosis she thinks must necessarily be superficial, and whose prescriptions cannot therefore be followed. But if the modifications of the common Articles must originate within the Church, does not that imply that the individual or individuals who suggest it must themselves have first departed from the position occupied by the framers of the creed. It is self-evident. The Reformer must have already broken with the old landmarks, at least to the extent, to which he desires their modification. Therefore, to concede that the Church may at any time alter its creed, if it receives fresh light, is virtually to concede all that we contend for—viz. that the Church must

be prepared to tolerate men within its pale, as honest subscribers to its public documents, whose individual opinions diverge from them less or more—that is to say, men who regard their form as defective, and even some of their statements as positively erroneous. The concession of the Church's right to revise her standards logically carries with it the toleration of diversities of opinion within the Church itself. And the fact that a man is ordained to office in a Church, and at ordination gave assent to certain documents, becoming an agent of the corporate body, does not tie up his freedom to enlighten it as to what he may discover to be errors in its formulæ. It would be an immoral act to sign away that freedom. No Reformation of the Church could ever have taken place, had such a principle been acted on. But it is equally clear that the Christian teacher who discovers the insufficiency of the creed he has subscribed, is not bound, unless he deems it his duty or his mission to commence an agitation for reform, to avow to all and sundry, especially to those who cannot understand his position, the precise details of his divergence from it. In doing so he runs the risk of giving needless pain to some, and of startling and unsettling others. He excites a commotion, and is sure to constitute himself a mark for the theological arrows, which the foolish and the fanatical will discharge against him. Besides he runs the risk of breeding in his own spirit the vice of self-sufficiency; as if, his detection of a flaw in the old and venerable documents was so important a matter for his contemporaries, that he must set a whole Church in commotion about it, fostering his personal vanity and self-importance. It would be far more

dignified, and far more healthful for him to keep silence, and use his freedom to profit by a deeper pondering of the questions at issue, and a modest effort to teach his fellow-men around him.

But, on the other hand, the reticence of opinion, and concealment of the chasms which exist between us and others, might be so excessive as to lead to an unbridled individualism, which would go far to destroy the cohesion of a Church. A Church symbol is a bond of union amongst the members of a corporate body; and were public sanction given to unlimited secret divergence from it, the sense of duty, which the individual owes to his fellows, might be weakened. It might lead to the hiding—and therefore to the weakening—of conviction, and to a policy of concealment which would have disastrous moral issues. It would be a palpable evil if either society at large, or the common body of worshippers, were deceived by the action of their guides.

Is the question, then, one of degree? Is each individual to determine for himself when his divergence has become so wide, that he must in honesty separate himself from the community with which he has been associated; and when it is sufficiently slight to warrant his remaining within the Church pale, and making no fuss about it? Is the individual, in short, to determine when his 'particular dissent' has become greater than his 'general assent' to the existing creeds? We suspect the answer must be an affirmative one; that while the Church adopts a common symbol for its members, it cannot enforce an absolutely rigorous interpretation of it; and that a solution of the difficulties which beset the question

must be sought in the direction of a relaxed formula of subscription. Our relief does not seem to consist so much in the substitution of a simpler and less intricate creed for one more involved and detailed—though that is certainly expedient,—as *in a healthier and more humane attitude towards all creeds whatsoever.* Let the Church announce explicitly that she regards her most perfect creed as, at the best, a very partial approximation to an ideal statement of Truth, a statement carrying within it the signs of imperfection, (and therefore of transition and decay), as truly as it is the record of discovery, or the trophy of victory. If she cannot bring herself to this humbling confession—which would be a sign of real greatness—let the individual members, who bear office in the Church, act upon that conviction. Surely it is as much the duty of a corporate body, as of an individual, not only to abjure the notion of infallibility, but also to renounce the conceit of great attainment. It is always a sign of mental and spiritual poverty in a Church to be self-complaisant as to the soundness of its creed. It is its permanent duty to ‘forget what is behind,’ even in the construction of its best theological formulæ, and to reach out after a better, while ‘whereunto it has already attained, it may walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.’ To the student of the history of opinion it is curious to observe how often Churches drift into the idea, that all candid men must ultimately come round to their way of thinking on religious questions, and this precisely on those points where their reasonings are most precarious, and their conclusions most disputable. The fact that men of equal intelligence, earnestness, learning, and com-

petence arrive at conclusions the most diverse, on the most momentous of all subjects, is too notorious to need either proof or illustration. What is the inference to be drawn from this wide divergence? Not that one is the victim of bias, and another of inveterate prejudice; that one is fatally in error, and another altogether in the right; but that all 'see through a glass darkly,' that all 'know in part,' that there is a residuum of truth within every error, and therefore that the difference in theological opinion, and the creeds in which they are formulated, is but a difference in degree, all being fundamentally inadequate and everyone doomed to change. It is a besetting snare of theologians and creed compilers, however, to transcend the limits of the knowable; to employ language, in expressing the inner essence of mysteries, which it is altogether incompetent to unfold; and thus, to draw out an exhaustive chart of doctrine, while the explorer may be himself far out at sea, and can take soundings with no other result, than to proclaim that the ocean is unfathomably deep.

Again, since intellectual agreement is of less and less consequence to educated men, since they usually receive more from those with whom they differ than from those with whom they agree, it cannot greatly signify whether the opinions of the religious teacher are exactly parallel with those whom he teaches; while it is always undesirable that theirs should be a mere echo of his.

It would be well to leave the spread of uniformity to the spontaneous action of that tendency to union which always exists amongst men, side by side with their inclination to diverge. And if, to insist on an

absolute uniformity would be fatal to the intellectual and spiritual life of the Church, it is clear that no individual theologian, and no company of theologians in council assembled, neither bishop nor presbyter, are able to draw the exact line of doctrinal assent, divergence from which is not permissible.

Theology, like all other sciences, is progressive. Being progressive, its data must undergo constant revision and scientific scrutiny. It follows that the doctrinal standards of the Church must change from age to age. And while the existence of many in the Church who cannot accept the creeds in the sense in which the majority accept them is an absolute necessity, it would be well if, by frequent revision and readjustment of the standards, this necessity were minimised. It cannot be wholly removed. But as events tend continually to increase it, as the progress of knowledge renders the old forms more and more fossiliferous, it is wise for the Church repeatedly to adapt its symbols to the onward stage which theology as a science has reached. If this is not done, the temptation to resort to allegoric modes of interpretation, and to make use of an esoteric sense, is proportionately increased.

To recapitulate, then, the conclusions at which we have arrived, on the ethics of subscription :—

1. The most perfect attainable creed is only an approximation to an adequate statement of Truth ; and all creeds are ultimately inadequate.
2. It is impossible for the same creed equally to satisfy every mind within the Church at any given time.
3. It is impossible for any creed to continue adequate

from age to age. Every intellectual form tends to become obsolete.


4. It is illegitimate in anyone to subscribe a document as the final expression of his Faith. Intelligent assent does not imply a determination to adhere always to the adopted or inherited form.

5. To leave a Church because of intellectual divergence in belief is cowardly, if not criminal; it is weak, if not irrational. It is deserting the Church, and forsaking the post of duty.

6. Reforms of all sorts are not only best accomplished from within; they are only possible through the patience, forbearance, modesty, tact, and temper of those who are already within, when they seek to carry out the reformation.

7. The best kind of reform is not accomplished by agitators who begin a crusade against existing creeds,—the men whose watchword is, agitate for a change, but do not innovate till the change is sanctioned. For the agitation would be endless; it would need to be chronic, in order to be thorough-going,—debate succeeding debate, with perpetual heart-burnings, strife, and loveless controversies, devoid of the scientific spirit. And in the intermediate period, till the change was publicly sanctioned and ratified, the Church would suffer from the evils of unhappy controversy, if not of internecine war, with schisms, and endless protests from dissenting minorities.

What then is our conclusion as to the moral import of assent to a creed? Premising that no one can rationally assert that subscription has necessarily the same moral import to all men as to himself, we affirm *first* :



That public assent to a creed is the expression of deep reverence for the faith of our forefathers ; a reverence, which the lapse of time, and the increasing inadequacy of the forms they used, only deepens and confirms. We look on their formularies, not as antiquarian relics which have survived the wear and tear of time ; but as the venerable memorials of their religious insight, and theological attainment, guided by that Divine Spirit, which has never been withheld from the Church in its work of creed-making.

Secondly, we express our personal sympathy with, and our respect for the doctrinal conclusions at which they arrived, not as a final expression of Truth, or their creed as a perfect mould in which that truth should be cast ; but as a trustworthy expression, and a valid mould for their age and time. We assent to it, and to its place in history—in the history of Symbols. We avow our belief, that the particular creed to which we assent, contains the truth without exhausting it. It may be erroneous on many points, incomplete in others, exaggerated and one-sided here and there. But we accept it, as more satisfactory than unsatisfactory, as more complete than defective, more trustworthy than misleading. We never can renounce our right to think independently of it, or outside of its limits, while we believe that it *must be* defective on some points.

Thirdly, we sign it with a certain self-renunciation, or abandonment. We sign it, as we have already said, *in the plural, and not in the singular*. We assent to it as the expression of the common faith, the belief of the collective Church. And here, as elsewhere, the logical law finds scope ; the wider the comprehension, the narrower the extension, or the less the particulariza-

tion. That is to say, if we are to have a public standard, expressive of the faith of the Church catholic, including all the diversities of Christendom, we must either have a neutral creed, very general in its terms ; or the individual subscribers to the detailed creed (which expresses the faith of the majority) must assent with reservations, and with self-abandonment for the sake of their brethren, not expecting a perfect formula in any case. Suppose that those who object to this, had been present at any of the great councils in which dogma was discussed and decided, had stated their views, and been opposed, what would have been their attitude? Would they not have continued to hold their opinions, even though the council decided against them by a majority? And if they gave their assent to the formula, as finally constructed, would it not have been with a certain reservation? It is no demoralization to the individual conscience thus to subscribe; but it would be directly demoralizing to assent unconvinced, or because the majority decided so. If, therefore, when we can assent to the propositions of a creed literally, we do so; when we cannot assent to them literally, but can give them a figurative meaning, may we not also do so? and, when we can do neither, may we not accept them as more adequate to our brethren, with whom we are associated, than they are, or can be to us; and be thankful for their satisfaction with them? We stand, indeed, between two opposite risks in this whole matter; but they unite in this, the danger of unveracity. If we subscribe a long and intricate document as the confession of our faith, which we have not examined with the fullest and most careful scrutiny, in the light of Philosophy, of History, and of Criticism—and have

satisfied ourselves that it is a trustworthy expression of a rational man's faith—we are, to that extent, unveracious in subscription. If, on the other hand, we assent to a document containing propositions from which our reason and conscience revolt, as if we received it implicitly, we are to that extent unveracious also. But if we sign it, not only as a personal expression of belief, but *as the manifesto of a Church*,—and in so doing, proclaim our unity and deep religious affinity with our brethren,—we escape from all unveracity, and can conscientiously sign documents, which are to us only partially adequate, documents which we would fain see altered, both for our own and for our brethren's sake. The vicarious element that enters, or may always enter, into healthy creed-subscription has not yet received the prominence it deserves. A man must have a strong reason to justify him in separating himself from the community in which he has been educated; and it would surely tend more to his personal growth, insight, and edification, were he to remain within its pale, and learn from those who think differently from him, than were he to add to the schisms which exist, or wander in pursuit of the unattainable ideal of a perfect Church on earth.

THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER IN THE ECONOMY OF THE UNIVERSE.

(The Contemporary Review, January 1873.)

RECENT controversy regarding the function of prayer in the economy of the Universe has illustrated the almost chronic tendency of two schools of philosophical thought, and the seemingly inveterate bias which they produce. The reluctance of the religious world to admit that there is a sphere to which prayer—in the sense of petition—is inherently inapplicable, is quite as conspicuous, as is the hesitation of the physicist to concede its legitimacy, and to admit its power, within the spiritual domain. It is natural that those whose life-work is the investigation of physical law, and whose researches are rigorously governed by the methods of induction, should wish to prove the value of an alleged power by definite experimental tests, such as the collection of statistics, or by some process not inferior in accuracy to those on which all Science rests. But, it is manifestly unfair to deal thus with a power, which the wisest of their opponents remove altogether from the sphere of physical causation. It is, perhaps, equally natural that those whose experience affirms that prayer 'availeth much,' should shrink from narrowing the area to which its efficacy extends; and, perceiving that the spiritual and physical forces are inter-related and reciprocal, should be

jealous of any encroachment from the physical side. It is equally unphilosophical, however, for the spiritualist to thrust within the province of the naturalist a power, which is unchallengeable within its own sphere; as it is for the naturalist to slight a force, the *rationale* of which escapes his physical tests.

The controversy resembles that which has lasted, from the dawn of speculation, between the Intuitionists and Experientialists; in which the disciples of both schools are reluctant to concede the full value of the data, in which the counter-theory takes its rise. It is, indeed, but a subordinate phase of the same controversy; kindred, in this respect, to that which separates the advocates of Evolution from those who believe in successive incursions of creative force. The success which has attended the labours of naturalists in accounting for the origin of species by 'natural selection' has induced them to extend the operation of that law to the intellectual and moral nature of man; where, although it explains subordinate phenomena, in the presence of free will, it breaks down. While the discussion is exhilarating, and the whole controversy a stimulus to patient and accurate research, *collision* between the two schools is philosophically illegitimate, and fruitless of result. In the one system, we see the spiritual protest of the reason and the conscience, against the domination of material law, and the paralyzing sense of necessity; but, in alliance with it, a frequent vagueness of statement, the airiness of mysticism, and occasional indifference to facts. In the other, we experience the healthful recoil of the scientific mind against all rash ontology, and alleged but unverifiable data; but, along with it,

the frequent collapse of the spiritual instinct, which leads behind the barriers of physical sequence. It is the part of a wise Eclecticism to attempt a reconciliation between the opposite schools; and in the question at present brought to the front—the validity of prayer—to vindicate against the physicist its function in the economy of nature; and, against the ultra-spiritualist to maintain the invariability of natural laws, and the irreverence of human entreaty for any interference with these. It is a blot upon our civilization that, in the conduct of this controversy, there has been so much heat and acrimony, and a lack of comprehensive fairness on either side.

No one, even slightly acquainted with scientific methods and results, can for a moment brook the idea of any interference with the laws of external nature, produced by human prayer. We may add—however slight our knowledge of scientific detail—that the amount of physical force within the Universe is incapable either of increase or diminution, but only of endless modification; that the physical nexus between phenomena, in their ceaseless flux and reflux, is never broken; while the order in which the phenomena appear is governed by the rigour of adamantine law. The links of the chain of physical sequence continue to lengthen out interminably, connecting the past with the present, and uniting the present to the future infallibly. Catastrophe—the breaking of the chain—is simply inconceivable; and so far as we can think of the complex economy of Nature as a series of pre-arrangements, they have been adjusted each to each, with the completest mastery of all possible emergencies. Were they altered at the suggestion of a creature,

either they were imperfect before the suggestion was made, or they were made less perfect by means of it. If previously perfect, the change would be undivine; and if not perfect until the change, we could with difficulty believe in the perfection of Him who made it.

This conception of the absolute fixity of physical law is one which the progress of Science has made axiomatic. Belief in an all-comprehending Intelligence, which saw 'the end from the beginning,' and 'determined beforehand' the history of every inorganic atom, and the evolution of each sentient structure, is a postulate of Rational Theology. That, in the guidance of the universe, its great Superintendent acts according to laws 'set up from everlasting,' is no less axiomatic. The more vehement opponents of this doctrine boldly challenge the datum from which it starts, viz., the invariability of material law. They say that it is an unproved, and therefore an unscientific assertion, that the sequences which seem to us invariable are so necessarily. Let us grant that the invariability is not 'in the nature of things.' The calm rejoinder of the physicist is, 'we have no scientific experience to warrant the belief that Nature's sequences *are* ever variable.' And were experience taken as our guide, the solution of the question on both sides would be easy. On the one hand, the efficacy of prayer to quicken and exalt, to change character, and to elevate human life, is a fact of consciousness. On the other hand, we have no experience of the suspension of physical law in answer to prayer. Alike in the physical and moral region, the causal nexus is inviolate and inviolable. In both spheres, it is as a man sows, that he invariably reaps. If he

injures his physical frame, he reaps the consequence in physical detriment ; if he impairs his moral power, and spiritual vision, he gathers the harvest of moral degeneracy. But, there is no confusion of the spheres of moral and physical agency. To put it otherwise, a spiritual antecedent does not produce a physical consequent. It may co-operate with physical causes, to increase or intensify the result ; as the physical may influence or modify the spiritual. But the exercise of the religious function of prayer cannot directly effect any material change. It is the appeal of spirit to Spirit, conducted within the spiritual sphere, for purposes that are strictly supra-natural.

It is vain to reply that we are continually interfering with the seemingly fixed laws of the universe, and altering their destination by our voluntary activities, or scientific appliances ; for in all such cases we simply make use of existing forces. We are ourselves a part of the physical cosmos ; and in accordance with its laws, we exert a power which changes external nature. But we can never escape from the domain of law. Were we to attempt it, our act would itself be a link in the chain of phenomenal sequence. The very moment we put it forth, as agents in a phenomenal world, that instant the energy we exert—itsself determined by prior influence—enters as a new element into the vast chain of physical causation. In short, we can only change the existing Order, by the exercise of a power which is itself a part of that order, and whose every movement is regulated by law.

The extremely vague manner in which those, who imagine that prayer can directly alter the sequences of nature, state their case, is in the last degree un-

scientific. Thus, it is said, may not God, who is sovran and free, direct the forces of nature in one direction rather than another, in reply to the free entreaty of the creature, whom He encourages to pray: and atmospheric phenomena are supposed to be peculiarly amenable to such 'direction.' Suppose then, that after a period of dry weather, prayer is offered, and rain begins to fall, will the theologian venture to deny, that there was as exact an order in the physical antecedents, as there would have been had no prayer been offered? Will he hazard the assertion that there was a break in the nexus between the descent of the rain, and the physical causes which produced it; that a spiritual agency, exerted by the petitioner, has become the cause of the atmospheric change—the condensation of the cloud and the descent of the rain—at a particular spot, and a special time? The crude notion seems to be widely entertained, that because the changes of the weather are apparently capricious, the wind blowing 'as it listeth,' it may be sent forth on special errands in answer to human entreaty. Is not this the polytheistic notion of Eolus, with the winds in his fists? It is supposed that the destination of a physical force can be arrested, and the otherwise inevitable result prevented, by an act of Divine volition. But the antecedent force *must* spend itself, and determine some consequent. It cannot be lifted out of its place amongst the links of physical causation, without the whole chain falling to pieces. Its efficiency, in giving rise to a new sequence, *is involved in its very existence*; while the discovery of the correlation and transmutation of the forces proves that the prior agent is still present, and operative under an altered form.

But, it is said, that while the chain of physical sequence remains unbroken, the local *incidence* of each phenomenon, or the direction taken by the links of the chain, may be determined by some ethereal wave of hyper-physical energy, transmitted along the entire line from its fountain-head, in delicately subtle undulations, resembling the waves of light and sound, or the flash of electricity through a telegraph wire; and that the course of this hyper-physical energy may be determined in answer to the requests of men. This assertion has all the characteristics of a hypothesis devised to escape from the horns of a dilemma. 1st, It is not supposed to apply to the whole domain of Nature, but only to a part of it; since no one would pretend that the rotation of the seasons was thus determined. Nevertheless, the fluctuations of the weather between two seconds of time are as rigorously determined by law, as are the larger successions of the seasons; and to imagine that the Supreme Power would thus isolate some physical events from the rest is inconceivable. It would introduce the most arbitrary casualism, in place of the orderliness of law. Again, 2nd, suppose there be no physical 'fountain-head,' but *an endless cycle of recurrent energy*; and what becomes of the hypothesis? Farther, 3rd, what purpose would this hyper-physical wave subserve, that is not already and better accomplished in the ordinary causation of the universe? Again, 4th, the introduction of this causal element, overruling and deflecting some phenomena of nature, would infallibly disturb the rest, and introduce bewildering chaos. For, though hyper-physical in its origin and character, the effect it is said to produce is not hyper-physical—in that case

we should have no controversy with its advocates—but physical; and it is believed to give rise to an interminable series of fresh physical results. That it should be in the power of any creature thus to launch a new agency at will, into the pre-arranged system of Nature, and thereby to start a series of changes which are absolutely interminable in their effect, is simply incredible. Lastly, 5th, we have no experimental evidence of this subtle wave of influence, or of its results, from which we might infer a cause. It is an unverified hypothesis at the best.

Setting it aside, therefore, we are forced to the conclusion that human prayer has no validity as a force working directly within the domain of physical nature. To pray for fine weather, or for rain—except as a humble expression of man's dependence upon forces that are vaster than himself, and on Him from whom they emanate—is quite as illegitimate as it is to pray against the approach of winter, or the return of summer, or even against to-morrow's sunrise. If the rain we wish is needful for our particular district, in the ultimate and general economy of Nature, it will fall, in due course. If it does not do so, that is simply because it—or its physical equivalents—were required elsewhere, in the balance of that supreme economy. To desire its local cessation when it seems excessive, or its local presence when there is a drought, is the impulse of human selfishness, anxious to possess the most desirable things in one's immediate neighbourhood (and ignorant of what these really are); forgetting that the Administrator of the Universe has to consider the greatest good of the whole number; that He is superintending the entire economy of

Nature, in which the apparent bane of one district is the blessing of another, while He is devoid of favouritism; and that these terms 'bane' and 'blessing' have really *no meaning to the physical universe at large*. We do not mean to affirm that such 'selfishness,' on the part of the suppliant, is very culpable. It is natural to wish for fine weather, after protracted rain; or for showers, after long continued drought. It is only absurd to suppose that our wishes can regulate the weather, or our requests determine it; and its selfishness, usually quite unconscious, is apparent, only when we change the wish, and suppose its gratification possible.

But we are repeatedly told by theologians that answers to prayer, within the physical realm, are signs of the Divine Presence, helpful to the suppliant's faith. Is this, then, a worthy conception of God's relation to the universe, that He interferes every now and then with his established order, to prove his own supremacy? That He interrupts the working of his machine, *to prove that He is there behind it*, and has power to alter Nature, or to grant the requests of his creatures? Is not such a notion the offspring of the very crudest anthropomorphism? It is difficult to imagine a poorer idea of Divine revelation than is implied in such arbitrariness. To those who think it gracious condescension, it may be replied, that it would be quite as significant of caprice. It is supposed that having created a tiny creature, and brought him into the midst of the universal Order—a creature who scarcely ever comprehends the meaning of that order—the Supreme Artificer finds it expedient continually to announce himself, by an alteration of the course and

destination of phenomena, at the unenlightened—it may be the selfish—call of that creature; and that He does so, while at the same time his presence is ceaselessly revealed, within every pulse and movement of the universe. But the very purport of revelation—which is merely the withdrawal of a veil—is not to show the creature that primeval order *can* be violated, or that ‘the material is subordinate to the spiritual.’ It is to announce the fact that the spiritual lies abidingly *within* the material, as its underlying essence; that it is omnipresent, and always confronting us, although phenomena perpetually veil it from our sight. And, while this is the philosophical notion, is it not also the biblical idea of the relation which God sustains to the cosmos? We have no evidence that the writers of our Sacred Books regarded the power, which manifested itself to them in unusual ways, as essentially different from that of which we see a daily apocalypse in the material world. So far from this, these writers uniformly speak of all natural phenomena as the direct outcome of divine agency. God ‘walks on the wings of the winds;’ the clouds are ‘his chariot;’ ‘his voice’ is heard when it thundereth, and so forth. To the Hebrew prophets and psalmists at least, the Supernatural was the Power which works *through* the natural order, and of which all the forces of the universe are manifestations to men.

But, there is a farther question, to which the physicist may validly demand an answer. All men instinctively abstain from presuming to ask God for certain things within the physical sphere—for example, for constant daylight, for perpetual summer, for phy-

sical immortality, or for the resurrection of the dead. The physicist asks us *why* we abstain from such requests? Is it not because we find that they are contrary to the laws of nature, that the occurrence of such things would involve the absolute overthrow of the existing cosmical order? And he is entitled to press for an answer to the farther question, 'Why should we draw a line, and exclude *any* physical phenomena whatsoever, from the category of the fixed and prearranged?' By degrees, we learn to include what seemed at first anomalous, within the majestic sweep of predetermined law. And is it not in exact proportion to our ignorance of what is fixed, that we make it the subject of petition? Religious men do not pray for eternal sunshine or for physical immortality. Why? Simply because they recognize that such would be *contrary to the will of God, as revealed in the laws of external nature*; and it rests with them to prove that one single physical event may validly be excluded from the list of the predetermined, before they call upon us to pray with reference to it. The religious world is surely bound to reply to this appeal of the naturalist.

Meanwhile, there is another objection that is fatal to this habit of prayer for things that are purely physical. It distorts the petitioner's idea of the character of God, leading him almost invariably to imagine that special catastrophes are signs of displeasure, calling for confession of sin and repentance. A season of unusual cold and rain, resulting in a bad harvest and threatened famine, or a winter of prolonged storm, strewing our shores with wrecked vessels and wasted cargoes, or a time of cattle plague, or an outbreak of cholera—these are regarded as signs of the displeasure

of Heaven, calling for general confession of sin, and prayer for the lessening or the removal of disaster. Men do this, and yet they call their ancestors irrational, because they prayed against eclipses ; and they reckon the mediæval warriors foolish, because they feared a catastrophe on the earth, when the auroral light was coloured in the sky. In both cases, it is to cower with craven hearts, as before a capricious Deity. The habit of mind it induces is disastrous to piety, and even to sincerity ; and there is often mere arbitrariness, as well as spiritual unreality, in the appointment of humiliation days for bad harvests or the presence of a plague. It would be more rational to appoint a fixed hour for humiliation, to last the whole year round, for the thousand human miseries that are more acute and terrible than loss of crops, or death of cattle, or winter wrecks, or the incursions of pestilence can ever be. Even the most ignorant of those who observe such days, do not regard calamitous events as judgments for special sin. The divine words touching the tower of Siloam have dissipated that idea, at least for Christendom. But it is judged expedient, when disaster overtakes a nation, or a community, to make some confession of sin in general ; and, in conjunction with it, to pray for the removal of the calamity. Now, so far as it can be obviated or lessened, by human action, prudence, foresight and conformity to the laws of nature, man may validly pray to be enabled to put forth that foresight and sagacity, and to conform to these laws. But in so far as the disaster is due to causes with which he cannot interfere, his obvious duty is to acquiesce in the will of the Supreme. If he prays—as he undoubtedly should,—it ought to be

simply for the spirit of submission. Even in the former case, it is only indirectly that he ought to pray for the removal of a pestilence. He may ask for wisdom to cope with it, for a knowledge of the laws of health, and for ability to conform to these; inasmuch as unconscious aid is frequently afforded to the will of the agent who is striving to observe them. Doubtless this is often involved in petitions for the removal of existing evils; but it is as commonly ignored, in the selfish longing for some 'special providence' which may sweep the pestilence away.

There is superficiality as well as irreverence in the easily uttered cry for deliverance, which so frequently dulls the edge of practical endeavour, to remove the evil, and to conform to the neglected law, expressive of the Divine will. There is irreverence in all distrust of the absoluteness of the Divine wisdom and love: and petition is altogether irrational, if offered up in opposition to the clear evidence of experience that it is fruitless, and that God does not thus gratify wishes, which may be the mere caprices of his creatures. Doubtless the undertone of all devout prayer is, 'Not my will, but thine be done;' that is to say, the petitioner confesses his ignorance of what ought to be, and rejoices in the surrender of his wishes. But in addition to this acknowledged undertone, if God reveals the fact that his will *is* done, *through the laws He has established*, is it not supreme irreverence in man, craving for a 'sign and a wonder,' to cry out for something more? It is blasphemous to imagine that God ever violates a law. The only violation of law, of which we can form any rational conception, is its *non-observance* by an agent, who can and should obey it: and,

in reference to such a possibility, he may always pray for strength, patiently to conform to the Eternal Order.

Conceding all this, and that not reluctantly, because it is in conformity with the dictates of reason, and also with 'the sweet reasonableness' of Christianity, we must also vindicate against those who impugn it, the function—and the 'sweet reasonableness'—of prayer, as a spiritual factor within the economy of Nature. It is unfortunate that physicists do not begin their inquiry into the *rationale* of prayer, by testing its value within the spiritual domain. They might disarm hostility to the doctrine they teach touching physical nature, were they to recognise in spiritual prayer, not a mere 'potent supplement' to the religious life, but the very pulse of that life itself.

Now, it is incorrect to say that prayer is ever regarded by its advocates as 'a form of physical energy.' Unless it be used as a very loose figure of speech, that is simply a travesty of what is held by all rational theologians. Prayer is always believed—even by the most illiterate—to be a spiritual power, the exercise of which by the suppliant on earth determines the action of the Spiritual Power above him, which in its turn accomplishes a change amongst phenomena. This may be erroneous; and it is for the naturalist to combat it, if he is scientifically able to do. But when physicists say that they 'cannot express their repugnance at the notion that Supreme Intelligence and Wisdom can be influenced by the suggestions of any human mind, however great,' is not this to deny the validity of prayer altogether, by a direct assertion to the contrary? We are informed that modern science contends only for 'the displacement' of prayer, not for its

'extinction.' But when we ask, what is the value attached to it within its own domain, we receive this very vague reply, 'that in some form or other, not yet evident, prayer may, as alleged, be necessary to man's highest culture.' It is a peradventure at the best. It may be of use; and that only as a means towards 'man's highest culture;' and that in a way 'not yet evident.' Does the experience of the ages then go for nothing on these two points—that the prayer of the righteous 'availeth much,' that it is the opening of a window to the Supernatural; and that, while a devout man prays, his spirit is touched from above, to finest spiritual issues? Have all religious men, who have prayed for inward light quickening and help, and believed that they were listened to, no claim to be heard, as witnesses in favour of a fact, which is dim to the scientific eye?

We maintain that the true sphere and function of prayer are purely spiritual—though in one important respect its results tend out beyond that region—and that it is, in the spiritual freedom of man on the one hand, and the eternal freedom of God on the other, that we find its *rationale*. The being and the moral character of God must, of course, be taken for granted, in any discussion as to the function of prayer. To every theory of the universe that dispenses with his existence, or merges it in Nature, prayer is manifestly an excrescence. It might still be an impressive utterance of the soul in moments of sorrow, or tragic loss, or even of triumph, like a stream chafing between the rocky barriers of its course; but it would have no rational ground, and could never be a duty. It is noteworthy, however, that the act of devotion, arising

out of the felt dependence of the creature, is one means by which the latent sense of the Divine presence may be quickened into life. Starting then with the postulate, of the existence and the recognisability of God, the *raison d'être* of prayer is almost self-evident. In a sense, it is by the avenue of prayer that—speaking always in a figure—we ‘come unto God, even unto his seat.’ The act of devotion leads the worshipper into his presence, not as revealed in space or time, or through any representative form, but as the ever-present and eternal Life. It is the inarticulate language of the heart, the voice of the spirit, recognising its own Original. This power of recognition, however, implies superiority to the unconscious forces of the material world. Had we no free spiritual power, differentiating us from surrounding existences, we could not ‘come into’ God’s presence in the act of devotion; for, in that presence, man, as well as unconscious nature, necessarily lives and has his being. Being endowed with intelligence and spiritual freedom, however, he may, by an act either of simple aspiration, or of will, present his spirit to the Divine, withdrawing it from the sphere of the sensuous, and subjecting it to the influence of the super-sensible. And the Divine Nature may then act upon the human, to quicken and exalt; directly ‘enduing it with power from on high.’ In the conscious freedom of our own wills, we recognise a power, irreducible by analysis, which proclaims our superiority to the links of physical causation, while it acts in unbroken harmony with these. It testifies that, in our inmost essence, we are not the mere products of organising force; but that we have—to use the Kantian term—natures *noumenally* free, and


therefore, noumenally related to God. The sphere of prayer is, therefore, the life of the creature, endowed with moral freedom, and the capacities of spiritual growth. Its value to the individual consists in the impulse it conveys to the inmost energies of the soul, in their ascent and progress. By a direct divine afflatus, it tends—when it is, in Pauline phrase, ‘prayer with the spirit, and with the understanding also’—to clarify the intellect, and to elevate the heart, to rectify the bias of the passions, to strengthen the conscience, to discipline the will, and to foster all the virtues. Are *these* results to be slighted, because the subjective power which co-operates to effect them is wholly inoperative in external nature? In that outer region, all is orderly and fair. But, in the region of the spiritual, there is conscious disorder, there is moral chaos, which is at once an evidence of the need, and a vindication of the reasonableness, of interference with it. Since then, it can be altered for the better, and since the alteration of this internal world is accomplished by the efforts of free will, while God works within it,—and is impossible in its highest phases, without help and co-operation from him,—why should not man petition for that help, why should he not ask for the presence of the *Co-operator*? For that is absolutely all. Prayer involves petition: but it is request for nothing outward. The petition is but the expression of that hunger and thirst for the Divine Presence, of which the Hebrew psalmists write with such passionate ardours, the longing for perfection, the desire to escape from conscious disorder, and to conform to the order of everlasting right, with absolute submission to the will of the Eternal. Thus the act of prayer is

the very key to the kingdom of God. We cannot dispense with it, without discarding all worship whatsoever, all recognition of the Supreme Being, or of 'the power which makes for righteousness' in the world. If religion be the recognition of, and allegiance to the personal and ever-present God, a man cannot be religious, and neglect devotion. He may be modest, reverent, humble, full of admiration, or awestruck before the mysteries and sublimities of the universe : but religious, in the sense above defined, he cannot be.

We are told, however, by all agnostic teachers, that this is a mistake ; that the essence of religion is the recognition of mystery, the essential element in prayer being a feeling of wonder and admiration in presence of resistless force, unerring wisdom, and everlasting power. As our confidence in the eternal order deepens, we are lifted to the 'Rock that is higher than we,' and filial piety evidences itself by the absence of any wish for a change of that which *is*. Mute dependence on resistless force, fearing no catastrophe, believing in none, independent of all 'means of grace' and seasons of devotion,—that is the alpha and the omega of piety. Surely it is the old Stoic fate, with its one virtue of submission, under a roseate modern guise ? To work, and to wonder ; that, and that alone is to pray. We are further told that whatever be the wisdom of the petitioner, his knowledge is literally less than nothing and vanity, to the Most High ; and that it is only his ignorance that leads him to offer up any petition. In short, the more ignorant a man is the more he will pray for, the more intelligent he is the less he will pray for, and when his intelligence is perfected, he will not pray at all.

It would conduce to clearness, and lessen the risk of misrepresentation, if we were informed whether such a sweeping condemnation applies to all petition whatsoever, or only to prayer for physical well-being, and interferences with nature. The opponents of prayer do not sufficiently recognise the fact, that few, if any, petitions are offered up, in an absolute and unsubordinated manner. Even when unaccompanied by the express reservation, 'Thy will be done,' this is—as we have remarked—the essential undertone, or the suppressed premiss, in all true prayer. It is the unvarying, yet most musical refrain, running through every song of the Church's devotion. And if rash suggestions touching the physical world are occasionally heard from the lips of rude though pious worshippers, we may be sure that the Hearer of prayer, 'unto whom all flesh shall come,' does not despise the stammering speech, due to infancy of mind. Such stammering, however, becomes irreverence in mental manhood; and in this matter emphatically, when 'we become men, we must put away childish things.'

We have already said that the mind, trained in the patient study of nature's processes, learns gradually to include even seeming anomalies within the sweep of predetermined law; but if it is also trained in reflective science, it will ask, 'What constitutes a law?' and it will discover that it is but the expression of the way in which the forces of the Universe fulfil their mission; in other words, by which the eternal Mechanist and Sustainer works within his own creation. *He* is the living pulse, within the whole machinery of nature; and the laws of matter or of mind are but the indices of his activity, the generalised expression or interpre-



tation of the way in which the Supreme Artist, Builder, and Administrator controls his own creation. So far all is fixed, although it is the fixity of unerring wisdom. It is unalterable, simply because it is the arrangement of an Optimist Ruler. But within the mind, contemplating this unchallengeable order, there is something that is not fixed. We are conscious of moral freedom, of the autocratic power of self-determination; while we are simultaneously conscious of moral disorder, and the need of rectification. The latter consciousness impels the spirit instinctively to look beyond itself for aid; while the former suggests the presence of One who is the source of its freedom, and is able to readjust.

It is not possible, in this paper, to unfold the evidence which our moral freedom bears to its own Archetype and Original. But, assuming the Divine Existence, and the resemblance between the human and the divine, the corollary is evident enough. If, within the fountainhead of the Divine Nature, in which the human lives and has its being, there is a fulness of life, unexhausted in the support of the existing Universe—power in reserve, yet communicable—prayer is but the approach of the human spirit to its Source, that it may receive the inspiration of that power. We must admit the existence of this reserve of communicable life within the Divine Essence, unless we hold that it has exhausted itself in creation; or that the *moral* fountain-head is an exact counterpart of a *physical* spring, and that what issues from it previously entered it in an altered form; that is to say, unless we believe in the reabsorption of human souls in the universal life. But if an addition is made to the moral contents of the universe, on the appear-

ance of every new human life, there must be a reservoir of unexhausted power within the moral Source. And if it exists in eternal wealth and communicable freshness—its most spiritual features suggested by the wells of earth, those ‘fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills’—man may surely pray for it; and may find it descend upon him, or rather rise up within him, pervading his faculties, moulding his life, and replenishing his will. Intelligent recognition of the ever-present Mind is itself an act of prayer. The expression of such prayer in the language of adoration or of trust, is secondary to the act of recognition itself. But no sooner does the soul look, as through a window, upon the supernatural,—we must speak in material figures, although we allow them to drop from the mind in the act of using them—than desire to approach the Divine Presence, and to be brought into harmony with it, instinctively arises. And that longing (of which St. Augustine has left so noble a record in his ‘Confessions’) the *desiderium* of the heart, is most truly the essence of prayer. It is petition for the loftiest order of good, tempered with submission, and yet prescient of success.

If, now, we are told by those, whose researches have confined them for a lifetime within the tracks of physical law, that with this region of ‘inner mysteries’ they are unfamiliar, it might be a perfectly valid and strictly philosophical rejoinder that they

have faculties within,
Which they have never used.

If, recognising the Divine existence, they are not conscious of the stirrings of that instinct which prompts

the prayer of the devout,—of that flagging of the wing of all endeavour which evokes it in some, or that sense of loneliness which awakens the filial cry in others,—they are not at liberty to treat it, either as a weakness, or an unproductive act, to be banished from the realm of scientific utilities. By the very conditions of the case they are precluded from pronouncing on its validity, because they cannot isolate the phenomenon in question, throw it into a crucible, and subject it to analytic tests. It is simply impossible to bring the life of the petitioner within the compass of any experimental gauge. As has been well remarked, ‘we cannot enter into the heart of those who pray, and take scientific precautions lest the experiment be delusive, and measure what was the moral strength *before* the prayer, and what accession of strength has come *after* it’ (F. Newman). Besides, the deepest aspirations of the soul are least discernible by those who study the process from without: and the most intense replies—accessions of spiritual power—are necessarily unperceived by those who merely watch the current in its flow, that they may compute the volume of its waters. They always reduce the worshipper to silence, and breed reserve. The soul may be kindled to unwonted glow with the inspiration of heaven, and may find that the words of a litany, or the music of a psalm, are the fittest channel in which to express itself; but the Power, which has reached it from above, can never be subjected to scrutiny, in its origin or transit. The concession made by the physicist that prayer may ‘strengthen the heart to meet life’s losses, and thus indirectly promote physical well-being, as the digging of *Æsop’s* orchard brought a treasure of fertility greater

than the treasure sought,' needs only to be extended a little farther in the same direction, to warrant all we are contending for. If along with the 'wise passiveness' which it breeds, helping us to bear the loss and the defeat, it becomes an active power, stirring the fires of devotion, and leading to moral victory, the immeasurable range of its influence will be conceded; and even a scientific truth may be discerned in that counsel of perfection, *Ask, and ye shall receive*.

So far, our position may not be challenged by any one except the dogmatic materialist, the necessitarian, or the agnostic. But we have raised the question, Is there anything beyond the subjective experience of the petitioner that may be legitimately sought through prayer? and we have added that, if the spiritualist maintains that there is, he is bound to define the thing, or class of things, with rigorous precision, and to show the reasonableness of his act. Now, the character of the class in question is easily defined. It might be thought that, as the popular adage puts it, 'man's extremity is God's opportunity,' the class would be that to which human efficiency does not extend. It is precisely the reverse. Whatever may be accomplished by human instrumentality within the physical domain may be a subject of petition, inasmuch as prayer may originate a movement which tends outward from the will of the agent, and indirectly accomplishes these results. This admission is in full consistence with our primary statement that the sphere of prayer is wholly spiritual; for the area within which the answer is vouchsafed is the life of the petitioner,—or of those for whom he prays—where the will of the Supreme may freely move the

natures underneath its touch. Thus, in asking for deliverance at a time of peril, the really devout heart will pray,—perhaps unconsciously—not for interference with existing order, but for help to enable it to conform to that order. And it may pray for the result, without alluding to the instrumentality; just as we set down a contraction, or a shorthand sign, for a full word.

Take two simple instances. We pray for a friend's life, that seems endangered. Such prayer can never be an influential element in arresting the physical course of disease by one iota. But it *may* bring a fresh suggestion to the mind of a physician, or other attendant, leading him to adopt a remedy which, by natural means, turns the tide of ebbing life, and determines the recovery of the patient. Or we may pray for the removal of a pestilence, and the answer is given within the minds and hearts of those, who take means to check it, or uproot it. The latent power, that lies within the free causality of man, may be set in motion from a point beyond the chain of physical sequence; and crises innumerable may be averted through human prayer, dislodging a spiritual force that slumbers, and sending it beneficently forth, from its 'hiding-place of power.' Nevertheless, it will always be exceedingly unsafe to infer, from the observation of results, that any such dislodgment has taken place. For, in the first place, there will always be a larger number of petitions offered up for recovery than are ever granted; and secondly, there will be many mere coincidences between prayer and recovery that have no *causal* connection. Restoration may begin immediately after prayer has been offered up, but it would be extremely

rash to infer that the former was the direct consequence of the latter. Suppose a case in which prayer is made, and there is no subsequent interference by man in any way, and the patient recovers, it would be an unwarrantable assumption to affirm that the prayer had caused the cure. Even were it able directly to affect the physical chain of antecedents and consequents—which it is not—it would be impossible in any single case to *know that it had done so*. As in the case of a spiritual response, we cannot insulate the phenomena one from another, so as to apply an experimental test. There is manifestly no scope for the application of inductive science to an invisible agency, which eludes observation. We, therefore, believe that answers to prayer, touching things physical, are only possible when effected through the agency and instrumentality of man; and that, even then, we can never know how far they have, or have not been granted. It is easy to perceive the reason of this inability, and also to see the mischievous results which would ensue, were such knowledge ours.

There is another aspect, in which prayer for physical results may be regarded, although no reply is ever granted. It may be a legitimate expression of our *longing for perfection*, or our desire for the harmony of creation, with the abolition of all that now seems to mar its order. It is doubtless a consistent theory that, as we live in an optimist universe, there is now no real blot, or lack of harmony, within it; and that what seems imperfect is simply due to the nature of our lenses, or to the limited range of the human eye, that cannot see all round the perfect sphere. It is more consistent, however, to believe that a real

chaos exists, which will be but temporary; that its temporariness does not destroy its present reality; and that 'the discords have rushed in' only that harmony 'should issue thence.' If, then, a disturbing element really exists, one who sees the meaning of the Universal Order, and is attracted towards it, may validly desire the extinction of its opposite, and may express that longing, in petition. This, indeed, is the very essence of the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.' It is a prayer for universal harmony. The blight and pestilence of the world are surely abnormal. They are not a part of the absolute order, are not even the outcome of law. We cannot speak of the laws of disease, as we speak of the laws of health. Disease is the non-fulfilment of the conditions of health. It is anarchic and lawless. It seems reasonable, therefore, to desire the extinction of disease, and blight, with physical discord of every kind, as well as to desire the abolition of all moral evils. The gradual wearing out of an organic structure by slow decay, when it has fulfilled its function in nature, is no encroachment on physical perfection; but its removal by a sudden stroke we lament as untimely: though in both cases, it is the same ending of terrestrial life. Just as the destruction of a bud is a different kind of a loss from the gradual decay of the flower, when its bloom is over. And our desire for the physical perfection of the whole creation, might prompt the expression of that longing to its Author.

Here again we are on the verge of rashness, and run the risk of inexactitude. It may be that the varieties of disease are as much a part of the fixed arrangements of the cosmos, as are the different types

of organisation. Certainly the causes which produce them have worked for centuries, and must continue operative in the future. Their variety may also have a certain physiological beauty. It is more in keeping with the general plan of nature, that human life should terminate in a hundred ways, than that all should reach old age, and fall monotonously into the tomb. Besides, we find a system of elaborate contrivances to inflict pain, and to effect slaughter and sudden death, in the animal world. The whole living system of nature, from the Infusoria to the Mammal, is a storehouse of illustrations of the same apparent evil, while—

Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieks against our creed.

And may it not be the best arrangement in our human world that hundreds and thousands should die—as we say prematurely—to make way for their successors? Is not their own life continued elsewhere?

Thus, on the one side, the fatalist alternative meets us full in the face; and, over against it are the signs of disorder, wreck, loss, and pain, presenting us with a physical text, which we interpret as *disease*, as an element foreign to the perfection of the universe. We may refuse to be dragged either into the Scylla or the Charybdis of this philosophical antinomy. But we can only do so, by the recognition of a Living Will, which rules the universe beneficently. The theistic faith and prayer do not remove the mystery which shrouds it, but they relieve its forward pressure.

History and experience alike testify that the power of prayer is simply immeasurable. Although to approach God with endless and irregular requests, soliciting him

for favours, instead of arising to do his will, or acquiescing in it, is unquestionable irreverence ; no theory of causation can defraud the heart of its right to pray ' without ceasing,' or rob the intellect of its assurance that spiritual ' prayer availeth much.' Mutual concessions, such as those which often end the strife of rival litigants, are unknown in philosophical controversy. But it would promote a better understanding between fellow-workers in the cause of Humanity, were our theologians and teachers of science to bestow upon each other a more frank ungrudging recognition ; and to say, as Aprile to Paracelsus, in Browning's noble drama—

Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last :
What care through *thee*, or *me*.

PRAYER: 'THE TWO SPHERES: ' THEY
ARE TWO.

(*The Contemporary Review*, December 1873.)

ALTHOUGH this Review is not intended to be an arena for debate between opposite schools of philosophical thought, I have been asked to reply to the criticism of a previous paper of mine, on 'The Function of Prayer in the Economy of the Universe,' by the Duke of Argyll. His Grace entitled his reply, 'The two Spheres: Are they two?' I cannot better indicate the scope of the following pages, than by modifying his title thus, 'The two Spheres: They *are* Two.' *

Our provincial controversies pass, and are forgotten. Happily the features which disfigure them are soon buried in oblivion. But the eternal problem remains, and must confront our children's children, who will inherit its burden, and be perplexed by the mystery that encircles it. It has been of late discussed almost to weariness; and those who have come to fixed conclusions may perhaps now turn from the controversy with distaste. But the reflective mind cannot lay up

* I ought also to state that I have hitherto abstained from publishing this reply, out of respect to the Church with which I have been up to this time connected; a judicial process having been raised against me in consequence of my previous article. While proceedings were still pending, I felt precluded from adding to the controversy by another essay in these columns.

the data of its creed, as we store treasures in a museum. Our convictions must be continually surveyed from fresh points of view, in the light of all knowledge and experience ; and the thoughtful worshipper, who habitually consecrates his work by prayer, can no more cast aside the problem of its *rationale*, than he can cease to think, or to meditate on his relations to the universe in which he lives.

The Duke of Argyll, ' not having time or opportunity to write more fully on the subject, simply specified a number of propositions which are to be found in my paper, either directly asserted, or by implication involved, with a few comments upon each of these.' I might validly object *in limine*, to this method of discussing a question of wide and varied significance ; especially as it leads us into the heart of a historical controversy much larger than itself. It is foreign to the philosophic spirit of judicial calmness and comprehensiveness, to select short sentences or parts of sentences—the most casual of which are treated as if they had been announced in the form of independent aphorisms,—and to criticise these in detail. Any reader of the Duke's paper, who had not seen my essay, might imagine that I had advanced a series of statements, like the successive propositions of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and tried to deduce my conclusion by a lengthened *sorites*.

Those who have read the Duke of Argyll's treatise on ' The Reign of Law ' will be aware that the question, raised in his paper in this Review, is there discussed. And both in the treatise and in the article it is admitted, that ' what are or are not the legitimate objects of supplication is a question which may well be open ' (pp. 62, 63). That is the very ques-

tion which has led to the formal distinction of the 'two spheres,' and in reference to it I humbly think there are materials for a clear and definite answer. But dealing with the treatise on 'The Reign of Law,' as its author deals with my essay on Prayer, we might find a score of sentences, which, taken by themselves, yield conclusions absolutely fatalistic. Thus, in the great controversy as to free-will, the Duke of Argyll appears as an advocate of the necessitarian scheme, saying, 'By freedom, I mean freedom from compulsion, and *nothing else*' (p. 415). Dr Ward, replying in the *Dublin Review* in 1867, has clearly shown that this is not a real but only a fictitious freedom. Again, in his answer to Mr Mahaffy, the author of 'The Reign of Law' says, 'I deny altogether that "creating" of anything is the function of the will' (p. 427). Again, 'The will of the lower animals is, within their narrow sphere of action, as free as ours. A man is not more free to go to the right hand or to the left, than the eagle, or the wren, or the mole, or the bat' (p. 304). I cannot, in this brief paper, plunge into the vast metaphysical controversy touching free-will and necessity. It is important to note, however, that in his scientific treatise the Duke of Argyll has explicitly taken the necessitarian side, though he calls it 'the amended doctrine of necessity' (p. 313), because with the majority of his school he gives up the idea of compulsion; the only freedom which he admits being freedom from constraint. With equal philosophical warrant, an advocate of the counter theory of free-will might call his an 'amended doctrine,' if he admits—as the wisest do—that the causal nexus is nowhere broken, and that the will never acts without a motive.

It is the Duke's necessitarianism in philosophy that leads him to identify the two spheres, over which he thinks that the same necessity presides. It would be ungracious, however, to attribute to him the logical consequences of that philosophy which seems to me to shut up the universe in the iron rigour of fatalistic atheism. But it is a relevant, and not I think ungracious, rejoinder to the charge of 'those loose rhetorical terms which are now so common on the reign of law,' to affirm that the rhetoric which attacks the physical doctrine of the invariability of natural law is loose, and quite valueless in its vagueness. His Grace admits, in the excellent work referred to, that 'laws are in themselves, if not unchangeable, at least unchanging,' and 'the least uncertainty in them would render them incapable of any service' (p. 97). 'Every law is in its own nature invariable, producing always precisely and necessarily the same effects, that is, provided it is worked under the same conditions' (pp. 96-7). This last appended clause is really nothing to the purpose; for, by altering the conditions, we bring in some new phenomenal antecedent, or leave out some old one, and hence of necessity the result is different. When the Duke says, 'there is no combination of forces which is invariable, none which are not capable of change in infinite degrees,' and adds that, in these senses, 'Law is not rigid, is not immutable, is not inviolable, but is, on the contrary, pliable, subtle, various,' I am quite at a loss to see how he escapes from the very confusion of terms, which he censures the physicists for indulging in. Surely it is *nature* that is 'pliable, subtle, and various;' not law. The phenomena are in incessant change, and new

combinations of causes issue in new effects. But to speak of *law* not being rigid, seems to me to be mere confusion of speech.

The detached character of the Duke of Argyll's criticism makes it impossible for me to follow him into all the by-paths he has taken. I shall glance at several of them (and only those which charge me with 'unsoundness,' not where the charge is irrelevancy); and return to the main track of argument, and the central question round which all the rest revolve.

The statement that there is 'a sphere to which prayer in the sense of petition is inherently inapplicable,' is said to be very different from the assertion that there are 'many things that ought not to be prayed for, as manifestly unreasonable.' Let 'the spheres,' then, be the spheres of the reasonable and the unreasonable. The problem is, Can these be defined? Can we indicate 'a particular class of things' in reference to which request for a change of the existing order is unreasonable? One aim of my essay was to define that class. The Duke of Argyll affirms that we cannot reasonably assert that the spheres of the physical and the spiritual are distinct; because, we cannot tell where, in our own organism, the one begins and the other ends. 'None such probably exists,' he says; and adds, 'many men are now in the constant habit of talking of thought as 'a cerebration.' Were I to affirm that this is tantamount to the acceptance of a materialistic psychology, the conclusion would be quite as valid as the inference which the Duke draws from the next sentence he quotes. He asserts that I must maintain that 'the will of man is not subject to law,' because I affirm that the principle of

evolution breaks down in the presence of free-will. I have nowhere maintained that 'the operation of law' is 'not applicable to the intellectual and moral nature of man.' On the contrary, I have affirmed that we can never escape from the domain of law; and that 'alike in the physical and the moral region the causal nexus is inviolate.' Then, of the sentence in which I affirm that 'the order in which phenomena appear is governed by the rigour of adamant law,' it is said, 'There is no intelligible sense in which this is true. The order of phenomena is capable of endless change.' But is the change ever *lawless*? Grant that the order might be other than it is, are not the sequences that actually *do* emerge governed invariably by the rigour of law? By the invariability of law I mean, that underneath all seeming apparent variability there is, and must be, a real invariability that is absolutely necessary; and that the apparent variability results from the weakness and inherent deficiency of our powers of observation, which are unable to detect the causes producing the variation, or those differences in the antecedent which produce differences in the consequent. To allege that 'the laws of nature are variable' is surely a statement which fails to distinguish what is apparent to the common eye, from what is real to the scientific mind.

Next, the assertion that 'a spiritual antecedent does not produce a physical consequent' is adduced, as if this were a general axiom of belief held by me—as it was apparently held by some of the Stoics,—a doctrine contradicted by the influence which the will exerts over the muscles of the frame. This is the most conspicuous instance of the unfair method, to

which I have alluded, of fastening on a passing explanatory clause, and dealing with it as if it were a metaphysical postulate. As used by me it was avowedly 'another way of putting' the previous sentence, viz., that there 'is no confusion of the spheres of moral and physical agency,' so that, as a man sows he reaps. It is simply a statement, in altered phraseology, of the truth that moral causes produce moral results, while physical causes determine physical issues. No physical antecedent can give rise to a spiritual consequent, though—as I expressly assert—it may co-operate with spiritual antecedents to produce or to intensify it; and, *vice versa*, no spiritual antecedent gives rise directly to a physical sequent. By pre-established harmony, they act and react continually. But it is not, for example, the morality or immorality of an act—a spiritual antecedent—that determines the physical consequences that result from the act. It is the physical habit (say intemperance) that alone produces the physical detriment, injury to the frame; while that which is spiritual in the act (*i.e.*, its character as moral or immoral) always has its own spiritual consequence within the moral sphere. This is the only sense in which the clause is used, which has been, by so many critics, dragged out of its legitimate context in the article. Next, I am told that I 'give up the doctrine of free-will altogether,' by the statement that it is vain to reply to the physicist who maintains the invariability of law, that 'we are continually interfering with the seemingly fixed laws of the universe, and altering their destination,' etc. And I am asked what other answer I have to give? I reply, the only answer that is possible,

viz., the conscious fact of freedom. It *is* 'a vain reply' to allege that we can ever escape from the domain of law; because the laws of the physical system always encircle, and invariably rule us in the phenomenal sphere. It is not in *that* region that we are free. It is only in the possession of a transcendental or noumenal freedom, the autocratic power of self-determination. Then my sentence that 'we are ourselves part of the physical cosmos' is quoted as if it implied that 'we are parts *only* of the cosmos, all that is of us, and all that is in us determined by prior influence.' I can only say that the whole drift and the express teaching of my article is that we are, at one and the same time, a part of the physical, and agents in the spiritual cosmos—these are the two spheres—and that in virtue of our being in the physical, we are under the domain of invariable law; while in virtue of our relation to the spiritual or transcendental, we possess the autocratic power of freedom. Next, the alleged statement that 'the destination of a physical force cannot be arrested, and the otherwise inevitable result prevented by an act of divine volition,' is regarded as equivalent to the assertion that 'divine will cannot even *direct* physical forces to the accomplishment of particular ends.' Those who have read the previous essay will have observed that I have not advanced the former statement as a proposition expressive of my own belief. I said, 'it is supposed that the destination of a physical force can be arrested,' etc. Then I affirm that 'the antecedent force must spend itself and give rise to a new consequent.' It would have been well had the Duke confined himself to a literal and relevant quota-

tion. In quoting 'a proposition' to be afterwards commented upon as 'unsound,' it is necessary to quote accurately. The question to be determined is really this:—Does the assertion that 'every antecedent force must spend itself and give rise to some consequent' involve the further assertion 'that the divine will cannot even direct physical forces to the accomplishment of particular ends?' Suppose a new and unfamiliar force to appear, breaking through the crust of familiar appearances, and influencing existing phenomena, the latter would not cease to act, although they would be modified by the former. The introduction of the new element (supposing it to take place by an immediate fiat of will) would have no meaning, were it not met by a previously existing agency, which still spent its energy around or against the novel element while modified by it. The function of the new agent would not be to uproot, or to extinguish; but to blend with the existing agency, and to determine a fresh result. Then, the statement that 'the fluctuations of the weather between two seconds of time are as rigorously determined by law as are the larger successions of the seasons,' is said to be quite true in one sense, viz., that physical phenomena are never uncaused, and quite untrue in another, viz., that these phenomena are 'incapable of direction.' I am not aware of any one (not an atheist) who has had the hardihood to affirm that physical phenomena are 'incapable of direction.' The fundamental postulate of theism is that *all* phenomena are invariably and continuously under the guidance of a supreme Intelligence. We cannot conceive a single occurrence undirected, if the universe is pervaded by an infinite

Mind, and an omnipresent Will. The error consists in the isolation of any one phenomenon or class of phenomena from the rest, and predicating a special direction of these, while others are left out of the reckoning. And to request the infinite Administrator and universal Orderer of events to direct certain physical phenomena (which may seem more variable than others) to the accomplishment of specific ends,—while in reference to the rest of the system of Nature (which seems fixed in established order) no such request is ever tendered,—is the practical error which follows in the wake of the speculative inconsistency.

The Duke of Argyll refers us to 'the reasonableness or the unreasonableness of a petition' touching external nature. But who can judge of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of such petitions? To make a suggestion under the pressure of apparent calamity, that we would prefer the course of physical events to be different from what it is, or is apparently about to be—that we would like more or less rain, that we would prefer fewer storms, milder weather, earlier harvests, less piercing winds, in short, *an alteration in the course of nature*—who can reasonably judge of the wisdom of such petitions? A time of apparent physical disaster may bring temporary loss to a few, but it may tend to the ultimate gain of thousands. A wet season may destroy the crops of a district, but it may lessen the death-rate in a nation. A storm at sea may wreck some vessels, but the same storm on land may sweep a pestilence from crowded cities. And to suggest a change in the physical order, which is divinely and infallibly directed, is to presume that the hints of our finite

intelligence are fit to regulate the divine procedure; that wishes—which may be the dictates of selfishness, or unenlightened caprice,—should determine the supreme Will towards an arbitrary favouritism. The rational prayer of the devout mind in reference to the order of physical events,—which is invariably the outcome of providential goodness,—is in all cases, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done;' while the fact that the actual course of nature and the fitful current of human wishes occasionally conflict, is one of the means of disciplining the human spirit, and educating us in trust, resignation, and dependence. The sequences of nature, and the ordered evolution of events, are a perpetual revelation of the divine will; and it is for the creature modestly and patiently to discipline his wishes into accordance with it.

Further, I have been told by the Duke of Argyll (and by many other critics) that by maintaining the invariability of the order of nature, I make God less free than man, even although the Divine will be revealed in every beat of nature's life and physical processes. I am frequently met by the question, 'Is man more free than God, because you say He cannot interfere with his own laws?' I accept the alternative. In one sense it is so: in the *non posse peccare* of the schoolmen. The divine will is necessitated to an absolutely perfect administration of the physical universe. The absolute Lawgiver, Artist, Mechanician, cannot undo what He has done, or do otherwise than He does. It is a simple contradiction in terms to suppose that, with a perfect foresight of the whole process of evolution, the divine Evolver should alter that which his omniprescience predetermined, and

bring out an equally perfect result. Doubtless the phases which that perfection assumes may be very various : and a new manifestation, wholly different from the old, may be equally perfect, being the outcome of the same animating and directing Intelligence. It is on this ground that the occurrence of a miracle can be vindicated before the tribunal of reason. But a miracle involves neither the violation of natural order, nor the uprooting of existing agencies.*

Again, I am charged with laying the stress of the exclusion of physical phenomena from the sphere of petition, not upon 'the moral features' of the request, but upon its physical character. On the contrary, I rest the invalidity of the petition, as a power adequate to work a change in the order of external nature, upon its irrationality, and its contrariety to the spirit of creaturely submission and dependence. Let the petitions, which solicit a change in the order of nature, be tested by the standard of their reasonableness, or by their moral character, as humble, trustful, reverential ; and, in both respects, they fail. The Duke

* We are arrested and surprised by anything unexpected, startled as from a reverie. But what is the effect of the start or arrest ? The surprise begets attention, closer scrutiny, and a more intelligent activity of the mind. The sudden or the rare may for a moment bewilder ; but as the unusual glory of the sky reveals nature in one of its heightened moods, disclosing the presence and the power of a living Agent,—a presence that is always real, though not always realized—so with the unexpected action of the Divine Spirit in history. In both cases, we come to believe in the constancy of law, by a closer scrutiny of what is apparently inconstant, or has broken away from its customary course ; the seeming irregularity giving us the hint of a deeper regularity underlying it, while the monotony of Nature is broken by the momentary flash of its sleeping powers.

of Argyll maintains that, according to my teaching, 'any part of the chain of physical causation extending beyond our knowledge will cut off our communication with God.' How this can be affirmed is one of those puzzles, which occasionally perplex one's mind, in attempting to understand the position assumed by an opponent in controversy. The very essence of my whole contention is that the Divine Nature is so signally revealed in its omnipresence, within every element or movement of the physical universe, that whatever comes to pass is the necessary outcome of its agency : every force and every change in nature being an apocalypse of God, and every link in the chain of its sequences attesting the indwelling Presence.

I now turn to some aspects of the question which have been overlooked in the previous discussion ; the consideration of which is more important and satisfactory than the rejoinders of an ephemeral controversy.

The general charge brought against me is that I have drawn too hard and fast a line between the spheres of the spiritual and the material, in the doctrine that physical nature is not directly amenable to the influence of prayer, while human nature is : that, in giving up the physical, I surrender that which the religious world is reluctant to concede : that, in retaining the spiritual, I keep what the scientific world will not allow me to retain. Now, I draw no harder or sharper line between the two spheres, than is implied in the proposition, that the one is the sphere of fixed cosmical order, and the other that of moral freedom. While the creature may pray with reference to *both*, his prayer ought in


the former case to take the form of thanksgiving, adoration, acquiescent trust, and creaturely submission ; while in the latter it may assume the form of incessant and fervent petition : or, if petition be offered in reference to the former, it should be for the simple *accomplishment of the divine will*. The immanence of God in nature is quite as much a first principle of theism, as is the balancing doctrine of his extra-mundane agency ; and the difference between his manifestations is but a difference in the way in which he announces himself to men. The gist of the whole argument in my previous essay is, that as God is the universal and omnipotent worker—all power and energy, physical and spiritual, being his—He is as fully revealed in those phenomena which go before, and in those which follow after, as He is in the intermediate and unwonted ones, which by their infrequency or peculiarity arrest attention.

No answer has ever been given to the demand of the scientific mind, why we should separate a class of physical phenomena from the rest, and offer petitions in reference to them, in a way in which we never act in reference to others ; why, for example, we should regard the rain-law as more amenable to direction, than the sun-law, or the force of gravitation. The whole question is thus reduced to a narrow issue. Is there, or is there not, a department in Nature of which the processes are variable, and in reference to which we may reasonably believe that they are, in any sense, amenable to our wishes ? Requests for a particular adjustment of the weather are irrelevant, unless the petitioner believes that the prayer he offers may co-operate in the production of the effect. Now, as has

been again and again remarked, the physical processes which we see repeated at regular and fixed intervals—such as the succession of day and night, and of the seasons, or, after an average limit, the death of the body—seem to us so inevitable, that we never presume to solicit that they should be other than they are. But what to our vision seems endlessly diversified—such as the kaleidoscopic changes of the weather—we are apt to imagine fitful; and therefore amenable to fresh direction, and special interference. If the rain descended, and the temperature rose and fell, as regularly and steadily as the tides ebb and flow, the dull monotony of the law would deaden our sense of wonder, would check the fluctuations of hope, and the excitement of possible surprises; and we should no more think of petitioning for their change, than of asking that the sunset should be hastened, or delayed. It is therefore simply because we do not know what is to happen in the weather of the future, that we venture to ask that it should take one course rather than another. But if the science of meteorology were as advanced as astronomy is, and our predictive power as great in both cases—which it may ultimately come to be—our requests would in both cases take the form of simple petition for the accomplishment of the divine will. If, however, what the petitioner means is simply to express his desire, or his hope, that out of the infinite diversities of possible weather, that should actually emerge, which coincides with his wishes for himself, or his district, or his country, the expression of that desire is legitimate enough. We continually do so to one another in the colloquial speech of the day; and,

we may rationally hallow our wishes, by presenting them to God in an act of devotion. It is altogether different, if we presume to imagine that, but for the presentation of our wishes, the natural process would be other than it is.

The invariability of the laws of Nature has a theological equivalent or corollary, which is the immanence of God in Nature, 'working all in all,' according to inviolable laws, which are the expression of his eternal will. Whatever, therefore, be the way in which he announces his presence, He is everlastingly within creation as its inmost life, omnipresent, and omniactive. There can be no possible interference, with his laws, because his agency must be equally manifest in that which precedes and in that which succeeds the alleged interference, as in the interference itself. Being himself within all phenomena,—the great Mover unmoved,—He is not only the fountain-head of all the streams of force, but the very essence of the forces themselves. Inasmuch, therefore, as in all the processes of nature, we see the agency of this omnipresent mind and all-prescient Love,—whatsoever comes to pass being the expression of the divine will,—the attitude of the creature towards the Creator's providence ought not to be that of a petitioner for change, but rather that of a dependent child, accepting whatsoever is divinely given. I have taught that the range of petition in the spiritual sphere, is simply immeasurable; but that, in the physical, it is bounded. It is bounded by the fact, that divine Providence has already arranged the evolution of nature; and, is not only superintending it, but is itself inseparably within every link of the chain



of established causation. Thus the doctrine of the persistence of physical force, and the invariability of natural law, is a physical truth, of which the theological phase or corollary is the uniformity of divine operation, and the inviolableness of divine love. The permanence of the order of nature is the scientific equivalent of the divine constancy, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'* All the laws of nature are the outcome of will, or the expression of the way in which a living Divinity is working in his omnipresence. In the contrary conception of them as created existences apart from God, to be bent and manipulated at pleasure from without, God is separated from the universe. Creation is regarded as an iron framework underneath him, to be animated or not as He pleases, and with which He may occasionally interfere, if so disposed. What we call the laws of nature however, are but an expression of the way in which the divine will effects its purposes; because He is for ever behind and within the chain of physical sequence, as the omnipresent Life, of which they are the outward revelation.

It is thus that one limitation of the sphere of petition emerges. The evolution and succession of phenomena are so infallibly adjusted, the balance is so perfect, that when what we desire to be present around us is absent, it is because were it present, it would be misplaced. We are not fit judges when we presume to suggest its presence, any more than we

* In nature there are a thousand laws, forces, agencies, crossing and recrossing, blending, interlacing, co-operating; but all may be generalised under a central law, because each may be interpreted as the outcome of one supreme and all-dominant Force. None of them can be overborne by this central Power, because they are all its expression, its radiant and many-faced manifestation.

are competent to criticise the order of physical nature. What seems to us disastrous turns out to be a blessing in disguise, and would always be seen to be so, were the range of our vision perfect. A request for a particular adjustment of the conditions of physical existence may arise from ignorance, or it may proceed from selfishness. When devout men offer up these petitions, they fail to realize that the balance of physical nature is adjusted with inscrutable perfection, and the completest mastery of all possible emergencies. They cannot know whether the rain or the sunshine, which they wish, are really needed, because they cannot estimate more than a fragment of the conditions of the case.

Is it said, 'If the living Spirit of the universe stands in a parental relation to the petitioner, may not the latter ask him so to administer his laws as to meet special cases and secure special ends?' Doubtless he may. The Divine Father will not despise the crudest suggestions of his creatures, even when they arise out of a forgetfulness of his administrative wisdom. And we might ask him so to regulate the machinery of nature in this or that province, as to secure the most desirable results to certain individuals, were it possible to think of him as ever indifferent to particular cases, or oblivious of special ends. But the supposed specialty vanishes if his administrative agency takes in the whole area of nature, and the entire cycle of her laws; and if its exercise be incessant, uniform, and impartial. To ask, 'Is not the order of nature amenable to divine influence, and open to fresh direction?' is not to state the problem accurately. The plasticity of nature is conceded, the moment you

admit the agency of a living Spirit within the whole, and interpret its laws as the mere indices of his activity. But that theistic axiom carries with it a consequence which makes the assertion of flexibility, and a possible variation of the order of nature, barren and useless. For if the existing order be changed, the changed and the previous order being equally the outcome of the same governing Intelligence, immanent everywhere in the whole, they would together afford but a slightly varying evidence of one and the same Supernaturalism. There is no difficulty in supposing a change to occur in the common order of events, which we may call 'miraculous;' but the events preceding it, and those which follow, would be equally the result of divine preadjustment, as the particular change which arrested and elicited the wonder or the admiration of men. The specialty in some which we call 'extraordinary,'—to distinguish them from others which we term 'ordinary,'—is due, not to a superabundance of divine agency within them, but to such a *significant display of it* as rivets and awakens us by its unwontedness. Were our vision perfect, we should discern a specialty in all.

As regards the power of prayer to effect changes within the spiritual sphere, and its impotence within the physical, I trust I shall be pardoned for again quoting from myself, in a footnote.*

* 'I shall now try to translate, out of the phraseology of which I have made use in my article, the truth which I hold, and have taught, as to the immutability of the laws of Nature.

'Looking at it from the doctrine of the divine decree, God has made "a decree for the rain," says Job. What science calls the rain-law, theology interprets as the rain-decree. "Looking unto the ends of the earth, and seeing under the whole heavens, he made

If we suppose that prayer has any causal influence upon physical processes, or upon the means used, say, for recovery from sickness—so that the one could not be effectual without the other, and that both have been predetermined from the first, the petition foreseen and fitted as a link in the chain of secondary causation—that supposition reduces the prayer to the

a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure, he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder ;” and in so doing he “saw, declared, prepared, and searched out wisdom.” Similarly, in the book of Proverbs, the Eternal Wisdom, set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, is represented as with God when he “prepared the heavens, the clouds, the fountains of the deep, and when He gave to the sea his decree.” In these statements, God is represented as giving a decree to the rain and to the sea, just as he gave a decree to the sun and the planetary bodies. One aspect of the decree for the sun is that it should rise and set with daily regularity. And though I do not affirm that it *must continue* to do so, apart from the will of God, experience of the fact that it does do so, informs us that such *is* the divine will : and therefore we could not, for any reason whatsoever, presume to ask that it should not do so. We would deem it sheer irreverence to ask God to deflect or prolong the daylight, in order to enable his creatures to accomplish any bit of their terrestrial work, because we perceive that it would interfere with vaster plans that concern millions of his creatures. We would not presume to ask him to change his sun-decree. And I maintain that, *for the self-same reason*, we cannot rationally ask him to alter his rain-law or rain-decree : for though its temporary outcome may seem to us to be inconvenient or destructive, our utter ignorance not only prevents us from knowing that the cessation of rain would not be more destructive to other creatures than its continuance would be, but prevents us from knowing that a change would be really beneficial to *ourselves*. But whether beneficial or not, we abstain from the suggestion. Why? Simply because we trust in a Providence that is inscrutably wise. Even then, however, I cannot see anything to forbid the offering up of our desires—if *they are mere desires or wishes*—to God for a change of that which is—a change in our physical experiences. It is a totally different thing, if we venture to solicit him for an alteration, believing that we are either fit judges

sphere of mechanical agency. It cuts away the freedom of the petitioner, and interferes with the spontaneousness of his request. But this is not the common belief of devout suppliants. It is the after-thought of a philosophy which, in trying to meet the difficulty by reason, drifts into a mechanical solution of it.

of its expediency, or that we will receive it because we ask it. If an east wind is blowing, and men would like a west wind, the wish, like every other wish, may be expressed in prayer. If men express it to one another, they may express it to God. But to suppose that the wish has any influence in effecting a change in the course of Nature is what I deny ; because I believe that the course of all the seasons of all the years of all the ages was adjusted with as much wisdom and fixity from the beginning, as the law of gravitation was adjusted, and that our prayers cannot now arrest, or hasten, or change, or modify it. We are not 'workers together with God' now, in time, and on the earth, for these ends. But the case is different in the spiritual region, within ourselves. It is in this sense that I maintain that there are two 'spheres,' in one of which our petitions effect an alteration and accomplish change. We are workers together with God in that spiritual region. In such prayer, the feeblest wrestler may prevail. But the accomplishment of the divine will in nature is not dependent on the forth-putting of our efficiency.

'It is that wide-spread notion that we are able to accomplish results by our petitions within the realm of the physical, similar to those which we are able to accomplish in the region of the spiritual, that I am combating in the introductory paragraphs of my article ; and it is that which many physicists oppose. I maintain that it would be equivalent to a power, placed within the hand of man, to work miracles in nature ; and that power does not exist : whereas in the spiritual sphere the petitioner can effect an alteration, whenever he puts forth the energy of spiritual prayer. It is in that region alone that he is able, still working according to law, 'to remove mountains.' To put it otherwise still, the transmission of messages along the telegraph wire may be taken as a symbol of the power of prayer in the spiritual region ; although all such symbols are utterly inadequate. In answer to the requests of the petitioner, a definite response is vouchsafed, which would not be granted *but for the petition*.

The popular notion that prayer for physical change, when devoutly offered, *can then and there* determine the course of the event (regulate the rain-fall or avert disease), we deem irrational and unconsciously irreverent. That the otherwise inflexible course of nature is perpetually interfered with and re-adjusted, by a fresh edict, sent forth in reply to the suppliant; that, in short,

It is otherwise in reference to the course of physical nature. We need transmit no request for that; because the system is already divinely pre-arranged, and our requests cannot hasten, or hinder, or touch, or modify, or alter it.

'I know that it has been said that, if this be all, the question is a verbal one; that there is no real difference between the two positions. But what I have been opposing, in that article, is really a wide-spread notion—viz., that God, in answer to human prayer, deflects, re-arranges, or alters the otherwise inevitable course of nature. What, on the contrary, I urge men to do is to trust God for the physical course or order, to believe that in reference to it there has been a vast system of pre-arrangement and pre-adjustment, absolutely perfect, and eternally good; and I think that with such confidence there may be absolute security that all prayer in accordance with the divine will will be answered. What I have combated is the notion that God 'interrupts the working of his own machine to prove his supremacy to it,' and that he does so in reply to our requests. I dare say it might have lessened the risk of misconstruction had I added a clause to the sentence, 'There is a sphere to which prayer (in the sense of petition) is inherently applicable,' to the following effect: 'Illegitimate in the sense of seeking an interference with, and inapplicable in the sense of accomplishing a change in, the existing order of nature.' But that such is my meaning is abundantly plain from many passages in the article. Then I have explicitly asserted that if, through the weakness and infirmity of our natures, in the undisciplined or less reflective stages of the religious life, we make requests for change—not distinguishing things that differ—these are not despised by the Hearer of prayer; and that as he is the universal worker, and has pre-adjusted the whole economy of nature, *whatsoever we receive* is an answer to the prayer—'Thy will be done.'

'It has been said to me, however, that if we can interfere with

the sovereign Ruler issues a new order when He approves of a request for it, instead of carrying out his transcendent purposes and the behests of his everlasting will, is a notion which must be abandoned. In addition to its being philosophically untenable, it is noteworthy that it is opposed to the *consensus* of the Catholic Church, and especially to the theology of Augustine and Calvin.

The other notion, of a pre-established harmony between our petitions for physical blessings and their reception, is a widely different one. Results, however, do not prove the existence of any such pre-arrangement. The thousand, the million of unanswered petitions

nature, much more can God ; and that as we work in and through it, freely changing its course, much more can he. I assent to this ; but I remember at the same time that there is no 'before' or 'after' with God. Time is an 'eternal present' to the eternal Mind ; and, as he saw the end from the beginning, with him there is no change of plan effected in answer to prayer. Prayer is answered in the evolution of Nature through pre-arranged, pre-established harmonies. But 'the alteration of the conditions under which laws operate,' 'bending them to meet the wants of petitioners,' would be the sign of a changeful purpose, not the index of an immutable Mind. Let me, therefore, say again explicitly and distinctly that I do not deny (1) the lawfulness of bringing all our *desires* to God for all things whatsoever. On the contrary, I affirm and enforce the duty of so doing. Nor (2) do I deny the legitimacy of petition for physical things, *as the evolution of the divine and benignant will*. On the contrary, I affirm and enforce the duty of doing so. Nor (3) do I deny the legitimacy of petitioning God for the removal of disease, or of all that is interfering with the perfection of terrestrial life. On the contrary, I affirm and enforce the duty of doing so. I maintain, however, the unlawfulness of seeking alterations of nature which are interferences with existing law ; while I believe (as already stated) that all prayers for things physical, which in spirit and substance are petitions for the accomplishment of the divine will, must be answered.'—(Statement to Free Presbytery of Dundee, March 25th, 1873.)

touching external nature effectually negative it. Were it a matter of pre-arrangement and pre-determination that there should be a coincidence between the petition and the reception of the benefit, the former automatically performed would invariably coincide with the latter; like the beat of two pendulums, stroke for stroke, or the working of two wheels, cog fitting into cog, with mechanical regularity. This idea, then, of pre-adjustment between the prayer (say, for the recovery of the sick), and the physical sequences that tend to the result, helps us no way towards a solution. What we wish to know is whether the one is to any extent causal of the other. Suppose the petitioner knew the entire course the disease was *certain* to take, his request would simply be, 'Thy will be done:' but, inasmuch as he cannot know its course with certainty, he is tempted to ask that it may be as he wishes it to be, hoping that his request may be helpful toward the desired result. I have already indicated how it may be so, in the subjective region of our own personality; how a suggestion, darted into the mind of a physician, may be the direct cause of the use of a remedy, which results in the preservation of life. It is our absolute ignorance, however, of what is about to happen, which prompts the expression of any strong desires we may have in reference to it. Now it may seem superfluous to remark that no one would think of praying for the non-occurrence of an event which had already taken place, any more than he would then ask that it should occur; although he might validly request that its influence over the minds and hearts of those who had experienced it might accomplish certain definite results. But this very obvious truth will cast light on the meaning and

value of similar requests, while the petitioner is in ignorance as to whether the event, about which he prays, has or has not occurred. If I know a friend is dead, I do not ask that his life may be spared ; but if he is dead, and I am ignorant of it, but believe him to be still alive, I pray that he may continue to live ; and such prayer is not irrational. When we pray for those who are absent, or at sea, our ignorance of their state does not throw an arrest upon our petitions. On the contrary, it is the very ground or reason of them. And the ejaculation of the heart—prayer thrust out, or rather directed upwards, at a time of crisis (who has not experienced it ?)—is not only instinctive, it has its origin in a region that is deeper than reason. Still, its utterance ought to be under the control and discipline of the reason. And being so, the request that is made, or the wish that is expressed, must be in its inmost essence submissive. Could we venture to split up the request into two parts (and distinguish them as form and spirit, or outer husk and inner germ respectively), we would find that the particular things we seek, along with the petitory features of our prayer, are the mere husk or envelope ; while the accomplishment of the divine will, and the acquiescence of the creature, is in all cases the inward germ, out of which the life of devotion springs. The one is the accidental form, the other the essential soul of our petitioning. Doubtless the two things invariably go together, for the analyses of our reason are the syntheses of living experience. But the difference between them ought never to be forgotten ; while our ignorance as to whether the particular thing we seek be really a boon, and as to whether it will ever be granted, might itself suggest this distinction to the petitioner.

I repeat that no theory of the universe, no philosophy of human nature, and no conclusion of science, can ever lay an arrest upon the instincts of the heart in the presence of calamity. Let men philosophize as they will, and let science march where it will—conquering realm after realm, and reducing all under the rigour of law,—the human spirit will always find immeasurable solace in 'committing its causes' unto God; and the instinct to pray for relief in times of anxiety, or of peril, is one which can never be exorcised from the heart of man. But it does not follow that it will always, or that it ought ever, to imagine that by so doing it can deflect the order of nature, or induce God to alter his pre-arrangements. The relief is obtained in the act of *submission*, not in the notion of being able to persuade an infinitely powerful and sympathetic Listener. We may be sure that whatever takes place subsequent to our petition is not an after-thought of God, suggested or obtained by dint of our continued solicitation; while it is the shallowest of solutions to imagine that the condition of the petitioner, and his request, were together uniquely pre-adjusted to the precise physical occurrences which ensure a reply to his request. Were these two things the *only* ones that were pre-adjusted? Are not all the antecedent phenomena, both of the material and the spiritual spheres, adjusted with minutest correlation to *all* their subsequent issues? every thought and feeling in the spiritual, adjusted to every turning of the wheel of the physical? * The causes that tend to the recovery of the sick are correlated to the petitions which solicit it, but are they not also correlated to everything else in the universe, in both hemispheres (the physical and the

* See 'Essay V.,' p. 186, &c.

spiritual)? In short, the adjustment is either universal, or it is non-existent; it is either everywhere, or it is nowhere. To maintain—as has been lately done—that we may pray for what we know to be an impossibility, is to degrade prayer, and to render it utterly futile. It is even to disgust men with a paradox, instead of consoling them with a verifiable truth, offering a stone in place of bread. If we wish not merely to increase the habit of prayer, but also to foster the spirit of devotion, the advocacy of such a doctrine must operate directly the other way.

When we ask, 'What is our warrant for presenting petitions for physical benefits, which amount to an alteration of the order of nature?' the usual answer is, 'the felt wants of the suppliant.' But, if he has any modesty or humility, he will admit that he can never be sure that he is not construing an utterly selfish desire as a divine suggestion to his spirit. We have obviously no right to infer, for example, from the absence of rain for a time in a particular district, and when our crops begin to suffer in consequence, that a change is desirable for the universe at large. Who are we, or what is the measure of our wisdom, that we presume to solicit a change in that, which, *by its very occurrence*, is a sufficient indication of the divine will? The question is thus narrowed to a very simple issue. Some of my opponents, in this controversy, affirm that we have no right to infer the divine will, from that which actually happens: we merely know that it has been permitted to occur, but we cannot be sure that something different might not have been preferred by the eternal Arranger of events. Admit (as we must) our ignorance of the best of all

possible arrangements, who is to determine this hypothetical state or condition of affairs? If we are not to take the actual course of events as an indication of the 'best of all possible ones,' what help are we to obtain from our own conception of one more perfect? Is not the very notion of a better physical adjustment, analogous to the vain suggestion of king Alfonso? * Does it not savour of his arrogance? Does it not elevate our most capricious or selfish desires into a position of higher authority and reasonableness, than the actual arrangements of nature which reveal the mind of the Arranger? Who will venture to assert that the order of nature does *not* reveal the will of the Supreme? or that his will—thus disclosed—is not perfect?

At the root, however, of all irregular petitioning in reference to external nature lies a crude conception of the character of him to whom the petition is addressed. If the notion of a Sovereign is more dominant than that of a Father, the wish to solicit the sovereign, for such favours as he may be pleased to confer, will be proportionately strong. But, if the whole economy of nature—the fluctuations of the weather as well as the order of the seasons—is the outcome of an infinite Mind, whose fatherliness is his supremest characteristic; then, the creature, who is also a child, will not presume to suggest—any more than he will venture to dictate—the means by which he or others around him should be externally blessed. To whom, do men pray? whether in times of disaster, or of prosperity? Is it not to the infinite Wisdom, and the absolute Righteous-

* Who affirmed that, had he been consulted, he could have suggested some improvements on the solar system.

ness, the perfect Purity and the eternal Love? to the omnipotent Administrator truly, but to one whose regulation of the affairs of the universe has no parallel in the statesmanship of a ruler, who has to make the best of circumstances, to decide on cases as they emerge, and regulate his actings accordingly? Our prayer is not the importuning of a dictator, any more than it is an appeal to a despot, or a suit before a judge. It is the voice of a child to its Father, the cry of aspiration directed towards the accomplishment of that father's will, and therefore in its very essence submissive, and therefore essentially unselfish. Being unselfish, it can never be an attempt to bring pressure to bear upon one, who may or may not be induced to respond.

The difference between the spheres of the physical and the spiritual is most obvious. In reference to the latter only, may we ask for change, or a reversal of what is. And the reason of the difference is abundantly plain. In the one case, it is unquestionable that much of what exists is inconsistent with the divine will, that error and evil, blight and disorder, are out of harmony with it; in the other we know that 'whatever *is*, is right.' In the former case, we may co-operate to change the order of that which is; and the results accomplished are as verifiable and authentic, as are our sense-perceptions of a world external to ourselves. In the latter, we cannot co-operate, or touch a single spring, by which the machinery of causation can be either accelerated or retarded. Even in the former sphere, we dare not proffer a purely selfish request. For the pain, disaster, and loss, from which we shrink, are often the best of

all things for us, and form part of the divine plan for the education of men. We can never be certain that, if we receive any particular physical blessing, others, who have as good a right to it as we have, may not be deprived of it; but, we may be sure that the increase of our mental light and the moral development of the will cannot interfere with the possession of these things by others, but on the contrary may be directly helpful to their enlightenment and progress. It comes to this, that the essential end of prayer is not the gratification of our wishes, but the subordination of the human will to the divine; or the gratification of the former only in so far as caprice and irregularity are extinguished, and their correspondence with the latter perfected. That correspondence can be attained only by patient submission, resigned trust, and acquiescence in whatsoever the sovereign will ordains. The end sought is not the extinction of our humanity, nor the absorption of the individual in the universal life, with *nirvana* as its goal. It is rather the development of the creaturely will, freed from caprice, under allegiance to a Lawgiver, 'whose service is perfect freedom.' The difference between the pantheistic merging of the universe in God, and the theistic subordination of it to him, is not speculatively greater than it is practically momentous.

There is another anthropomorphic notion, which, although occasionally helpful to the mind—as all symbols and parables are helpful to it, and sometimes even necessary—is apt to interfere with a rational conception of God, as well as with the tranquillities of devotion. I have said that it is the extra-mundane conception of God—while his immanence is overlooked

—that leads to the farther notion of his interference from without, readjusting the order of events. We forget that this agency could not be more truly manifested by the alteration, than it is shewn in the order that now is. And so, the idea of a Sovereign, occupying some vast semi-physical, semi-spiritual throne, in the ærial regions of the universe, whither our petitions ascend and whence his responses come, destroys both the grandeur and the spirituality of his omnipresence. The throne is not more truly in the upper heaven, than it is in the lower earth, and within the heart of the petitioner : for the divine Presence, being necessarily universal, cannot be localised upon a spot. Thus, the idea of distance, between the suppliant and him to whom he prays, is abolished. The divine infinity does not remove God from the creature, on the contrary it abolishes the distance between them. As truly as finite and infinite are correlatives in thought, so truly are the divine Presence and the human inseparables in fact. '*Whither* could we flee from his presence ?' says a psalmist. Thus, the replies vouchsafed are not transmitted from a distance, as messages would be flashed along a wire. They are the intellectual rays, the spiritual suggestions, the inward inspirations, the fresh disclosures, the new desires, the onward energies, the aims ennobled and motives etherealized, the heightening and the quickening of the petitioner's life,—all of which have their origin in God, and their destination in the heart of man. The answer comes along the channel of the petitioner's life—just as normally as a brook is fed by subterranean springs, or by a fresh rain-fall amongst the mountains. Within the Petitioned, the petitioner 'lives and moves

and has his being ;' and the pulse of his life beats quick or slow, according to the fulness of his inspiration, and the extent of his receptivity.

Stress ought also to be laid upon the non-verifiable character of all alleged *answers* to prayer for physical good : that is to say, our interpretation of special events as specific answers—while in the so-called ' general course of providence,' no such specialty is recognised—cannot be vindicated. Why should I arbitrarily isolate a few phenomena from the general chain, and because they happen to coincide with my wishes, interpret these as a divine reply to my entreaty, while I fail to see an equally beneficent response in all the other links, in the special phenomena I did not seek, and could not foresee, when I merely said ' Thy will be done ?' No record of *coincidences* can prove a causal connection, or even suggest it ; unless the instances are exceptionally numerous, and unless other causes leading to the result are excluded by rigid methods of verification. In the inner sphere, however, verification is possible. In the realm of our spiritual freedom, the request and the reply are alike definite and clear. And the one is causal of the other, in the only sense in which causality can belong to a request, viz., that it leads to its fulfilment.

On the necessitarian theory of the universe, petitionary prayer is manifestly an excrescence. It might be the pathetic cry of the heart in pain, as the nerves of sensation shrink before inflicted suffering ; but it could not be an intelligent appeal. If our freedom is but the absence of constraint—and not a positive power transcending necessity—we need not present our suit at all. For the question, which both the

heart and the intellect raise, is not, ' May we, if we choose, offer up petitions for a special destination of the physical forces ? ' It is, ' What is our warrant for expecting that certain responses will follow, which would not be ours, save for the requests which solicit them ? ' Now the only sphere in which replies of this kind are *verifiable*, is the life of the petitioner, or other kindred lives, or humanity at large. We cannot suppose the divine presence or energy increased, within the physical realm ; but wherever there is a moral nature, or an aggregate of such natures, in society, there is room for increase, there is scope for incessant change, with endless modifications and additions. If human nature be distinct from, and yet kindred to, the divine—if human society be amenable to a ' power that worketh in it '—there can be no limit to the efficacy of petition directed to that end. The sphere of petitionary prayer will thus cover the whole area of human life, and be verifiable throughout that area. There can be no possible pursuit, enterprise, or vocation, in reference to which a man may not pray, if in the course of it he needs assistance ; but, even then, the essence of his prayer will be *aspiration tempered by submission*. The accomplishment of the divine will must, in every case, form—as I have already said—' the undertone of all devout petitioning ; ' and the distinction drawn between the contrasted ' spheres ' arises simply from the fact, that in the one we co-operate towards the production of results, while in the other we ' stand still ' and witness them. In the former sphere,

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

In the latter, 'the sun rises on the evil and on the good' impartially; and 'the rain falls on the just and on the unjust,' whether men pray for it, or abstain.

I must, however, notice an objection which has more force than any I have seen urged, against this doctrine of 'the two spheres.' I have objected to requests for specific physical details on the ground that we are absolutely ignorant whether rain or sunshine, storm or calm, be really the best thing for any particular district of the earth, at a particular time. But neither, it may be said, can we know that the illumination of our minds and hearts, in a particular manner at a particular time, is the best for us; and, therefore, if the objection be valid in the one case, it is equally so with regard to the other. We must consider this. Every man is presumably aware of what he most needs, in the way of light and personal help. He may miscalculate much. That is inevitable. But as self-knowledge grows, he learns his weaknesses, and frailties. He can therefore ask for the rectification of what is amiss or disorderly, with more or less assurance that his request for particulars is wise. Whatever may be his subjective state, he always stands in need of more intellectual light, and moral steadfastness, of strength of will, purity of heart, uprightness, humility, and charity. He will not, in this case any more than in the former, specify minute details with excessive unreserve. But he cannot err in petition for spiritual good, for the control of all his wayward tendencies, the regulation of his passions, the removal of every bias, and the discipline of his spirit in righteousness. The change which he seeks is in himself, not in the order of the universe or of

the divine administration. It is personal ; it is intelligible ; it is verifiable.

There is another special point to be noted in connection with the general statement that the accomplishment of the divine will is 'the undertone, or the suppressed premiss,' in all true prayer.* Since this Will is manifested throughout the whole economy of nature, its entire compass and detail naturally becomes a fit subject for petition. If the course of nature is seemingly adverse to the petitioner, his desires may find expression in such words as these: 'Let thy good and holy and merciful will be done, in all these our troubles and adversities: In thine own time, grant us deliverance from them, and from all evil: Be pleased to supply all our earthly wants, and all our human needs: We cast ourselves upon thy gracious care: We put our trust in thee.' In praying, therefore, for our daily bread, without any suggestion of details, we virtually include within the request all the specific particulars by which the petition could possibly be answered. And thus, our request is substantially, though indirectly, met by whatsoever comes to pass. In short, since all unselfish prayer, touching outward things, contemplates the universal good along with individual benefit, our special requests—say for rain, or an abundant harvest—may be responded to by the descent of the former, or the ingathering of the latter,

* 'It is,' (as I have elsewhere said) 'in different aspects, the essence, or pre-supposition, or appendix of every request worthy of the child on earth to its Parent in heaven. But it is not a mere cry of ignorance, couched in the modest phraseology of submission. It is an intelligent assertion, the embodiment of a rational conviction, that the Divine Will is infallibly working out its remote transcendent purposes.'

anywhere over the whole area of the globe. We petition for rain, and it falls amongst the Andes ; we ask for fair weather, and the sun shines out upon the plains of India ; but our requests are fulfilled as truly as if we experienced what we sought at home.

I cannot close this second article without remarking, that if prayer be absolutely powerless as a spiritual agency in human life, there is not only a logical inconsistency in all the Christian litanies, but there would be a latent hypocrisy in their use, most withering to the heart. To practise prayer, without belief in its efficacy, is either the shallowest of delusions, the most miserable of mockeries, or it is an attempt to invoke the ghost of a dead conviction, to revisit us from the realm of shadows. On the other hand, if its uselessness be accepted as a foregone conclusion, and the practice abandoned as fanatical, the spirit of man will droop to the level of material interests. Religion will rapidly deteriorate, if it is not extinguished ; and all the heroism of morality, all ardour in the practise of difficult virtue, will be paralysed in the very moment of its birth. For prayer is the lever of the spiritual life ; nay—to speak in various figures—it is the lung by which it breathes, the atmosphere in which it floats, the wing by which it speeds its flight, and the language in which it communes with its Original. To deny the accessibility of the human spirit to the secret influences and inspiration of heaven is the coarse negation of materialism. But no one who believes in God as the inward Light, as well as the outward glory of the universe, can have any overpowering difficulty in seeing how he answers prayer. Whether as a sigh

of aspiration, or an act of surrender, or as the hunger of the soul for an immortal consolation, it brings with it its own evidence unsought.

It may be the lot of no one finally to bridge the gulf which has so often separated the scientific from the religious mind, and kept them at unsympathetic distances and in alien territories, or as rival competitors for the homage of mankind. He would be more foolish than bold who hoped to do so, by a theory, or an essay, or a treatise. The reconciliation will be accomplished by the slow developments of eclectic thought, when generations happier than ours learn to avoid the 'falsehood of extremes.' But every attempt to throw a plank across the chasm—if made with reverent purpose—may tend to lessen the misunderstandings, and to heal the estrangements of our time. It would be something gained, were those, whose creed is a simple *laborare orare*, to suspect that they may be ignoring a mystic power within themselves,—that they may possess

a faculty which they have never used ;

and were those, on the other hand, who imagine that the course of nature can be altered at the request of a creature, to perceive that the invariability of her laws is but the synonym of divinest Constancy. Our theoretic belief that 'all things are possible' with God, must be limited by the practical conviction that He does only what is best; and our individual requests must follow the example of the Highest: '*Si possibile transeat calix, sed non quod ego volo, sed quod Tu.*'

NATURE AS INTERPRETED BY WORDSWORTH.

(A lecture delivered to the *Halifax Literary and Philosophical Society*, and to the *Birmingham and Midland Institute*, February and March 1879).

I AM to explain the way in which our English poet Wordsworth interpreted Nature, and to indicate the value of that interpretation, as one which unites and harmonises the conclusions of Science and Philosophy, of Poetry and Religion.

It may be a useful introduction, if I begin with some remarks on the poetic as contrasted with the scientific interpretation of Nature.

The two objects with which both Poetry and Science deal are Nature and Man : on the one hand this wondrous universe in which we live, which surrounds us from the cradle to the grave, and to which we have so many complex relations ; and on the other, our own human nature where many elements are blended, and diverse currents meet, alike in the individual and the race. These are the objects with which both Science and Philosophy are occupied. They constitute the spheres within which all poetic effort moves ; and their relations are singularly close and vital. They form two worlds, united in a larger whole ; so that between them there are affinities and correspondences of the most subtle order. They are so adjusted that

reciprocal influences are incessantly coming and going, across the barrier which separates them; and that when the one appeals, the other invariably in due time responds.

While this is the case, it has been sometimes imagined that there can be no natural alliance between the scientific and the poetic interpretation of Nature, or between these and the philosophic and religious interpretation; that, if there is not antagonism, there is at least no concord, that they do not constitute a natural harmony. I think it may be shown, on the contrary, that there is a luminous point, where all the four unite; a common focus, at which indeed their respective conclusions are one. 'If the true,' 'the beautiful,' 'and the good' can be combined in the harmony of a single principle, then Science, Poetry, and Religion are of necessity three allied provinces; while Philosophy may be said to underlie them all: and I do not know a greater intellectual service that one can render to his fellow-men than by helping to remove misunderstandings between labourers in these provinces, and to destroy the artificial barriers which still unhappily exist as walls of separation between them.

It is the merest commonplace to tell you that Science deals with phenomena and their laws; that Philosophy is occupied with first principles, with the essence and the unity of things; that Poetry deals with the beautiful, and Religion with what pertains to the divine. So elementary and surface a statement, however, will not enable us to solve the problem of the respective relations of these provinces. But, if I go on to say, that the aim of *Science* is to reduce the miscellaneous to order, and the manifold to unity, by

the discovery of simpler and simpler laws, till it combines all the phenomena of which it takes cognisance under the widest possible generalisation ; and that it is the aim of *Philosophy* to grasp the underlying essence of the universe, to find the unity of the whole by the exercise of thought, and to explain existence by an effort of the speculative reason, you will see that, in reference to two of the departments in question, we have at least got beyond the commonplace. When I go on farther to say that *Poetry* is the rhythmic utterance of human thought and feeling, dealing with certain phenomena of nature and of human life, not as science deals with them, under the cold light of intelligence, that it may discover laws, but imaginatively, —while the glow of emotion mingles with the wonder of the intellect, and the mind rests delightedly in the contemplation of its object,—it may perhaps be felt that we have made a farther advance, both towards the separation of the provinces, and a perception of the harmony of their aim. If I say, in addition, that *Religion* pursues its way, more by feeling than by thought (though with both combined), to find a central Unity, and to repose upon it—namely, that unity of Life, Reason, and Feeling, which lies at the heart of the universe, and pervades it from centre to circumference, it may be supposed that we have taken another step in the same direction.

Now, since the unity of the world may be discerned either by reason or by imagination, it is a conclusion to which we are led, both by Philosophy and by Poetry : and, as there is a point at which philosophy and poetry meet, this unity will be most clearly apprehended, when the result we have reached by a specula-

tive process is vivified by a subsequent poetic glance. You will observe, however, that in neither case—neither as a conclusion of Philosophy nor of Poetry—is this unity reached by the summing up of particulars into a larger whole, or by any expansion or multiplication of individual things. We cannot apprehend the unity of the world, by adding together a number of finite elements. We perceive it only when we pass beyond the finite, in a single glance, directed towards the whole of Nature, throwing all consideration of particulars out of account in the process. The scientific search, on the other hand, begins by analysis and division; and it proceeds by the method of addition, or the summation of results. It is true that it tends towards unity in the long run; but it starts from the variety and multiplicity of Nature. Its aim is the discovery of law. But in order to the discovery of law, Nature must, in the first instance, be studied in fragments. It must be explored piecemeal, scrutinised and questioned in detail. It is for this reason that each science has a comparatively limited area. Moving within the sphere of a special group of phenomena, its conquests are always won by concentration, and minuteness of analysis. Thus none of the special sciences unfold either the principle of Nature as a whole, or its unity. Of course they all conduct us into regions worth exploring, and all yield results that are helpful in the higher enquiry which follows. But it is not by groping amongst details that the meaning of Nature as a whole, or the principle of its unity can be discovered. It is by a totally different process—viz., by the synthesis, which may either follow the analyses of science, or may precede them. In other words it is,

by the joint exercise of Reason and of Imagination, or by speculative and poetic Intuition combined. I need hardly add that this insight into the unity of things is not inconsistent with a scientific knowledge of detail ; but is, on the contrary, either its pre-supposition, or its natural sequel and supplement. Nay, it is perhaps never thoroughly appreciated, till some of the sciences of observation have been mastered. But as all science ends in mystery (its last word being of the unknown and the unknowable), there is a sense in which when that last word has been spoken, its utterance has simply cleared the way, for Philosophy to essay what I think is the grander task of interpreting the unity of things, for Poetry to unfold the symbolism, and for Religion to apprehend the 'open secret' of the world.

So much for the different ways in which Science, Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion respectively tend, while they unitedly seek the harmony of Nature and Man.

Turning now to the poetic attitude and interpretation, as distinct from the others, there are many different ways in which the poets have felt, and tried to explain the significance of Nature. And probably we shall best understand the way in which Wordsworth regarded it (which I believe to be the highest) if we begin by considering some other aspects, under which it has been more usually contemplated.

(1.) There is the simple delight felt by all unsophisticated hearts, in the presence of the grander or more beautiful phenomena of Nature ; a sense of its loveliness which soothes, and of its freshness which re-invigorates. I do not refer to the mere exuberance of spirit, with which, in childhood, or early youth, we

may have wandered in the fields, or woods, or mountains, rejoicing in nature, because our physical frames thrilled with the bounding sense of health and freedom. Exquisitely delightful while it lasts, this gradually passes away; and it is, at its best, an animal exhilaration, although in elevated natures it may be indefinitely refined. If it is not on the same level, with the delight of bird or beast in warm days, clear air, sweet sounds, and happy gambolings; such appreciation of Nature rises certainly to no higher level than that of Peter Bell the potter. But I refer to that delight in Nature which the child sometimes feels, while gazing on a cloud, or listening to the murmur of a brook, or to the roar of the ocean, or in looking up with clear and wondering eye to the blue heaven, or into the bright heart of a flower,—an experience in which *wonder* and *restfulness* are the main constituents. It is admirably expressed by Henry Vaughan, in his poem 'The Retreat,' when he speaks of his 'angel infancy' as a time

When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour.

Chaucer has embodied it, still more felicitously, in many passages; and he may be taken as its chief representative in English poetry, while this attitude towards nature may be said to be distinctive of the Chaucerian period. In all cases, it is simple, unreflective gladness. The very essence of the feeling consisting in this, that there is no analysis or subtlety in it. The soothing influence of Nature is felt, diffusing a spirit of contentment and repose, filling the mind with restful gladness, or with deep emotion, or inspiring peace. But you will observe that this is due, not

merely to Nature, as known through the senses, but as appreciated by the soul, though not analysed by the understanding. Wordsworth has expressed the same feeling in his well-known lines on *Tintern Abbey*, although he has added something of his own, quite different from the 'child-feeling' of Chaucer, and Vaughan. He says,

For nature then
To me was all in all. I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion, the tall rock
The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite : a feeling and a tone
That had no need of a remoter charm.
By thought supplied or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye, &c.

(2.) Another way of contemplating Nature—in some respects higher, in others lower than this—is that of looking at it mainly as a storehouse of imagery, or illustration of things which belong to the world of humanity. As such, it is regarded with no special interest of its own, certainly with no fascination on its own account, but as a treasury of emblems which may be drawn upon at will, to relieve the dry narration of events, or to make vivid the portraiture of human affairs. In this case, the human element and interest are supreme ; the illustrations from Nature are quite a secondary and subordinate filling up of the picture. You see the tendency conspicuously in Homer, when after the description, say of the preparation for battle, or of the appearance of a chieftain, or the effect of his address, or of his prowess in the fray, it is added, ' as when '—and then follows a picture, drawn straight

from Nature, which usually in a few simple touches photographs the scene, and vivifies the whole by a striking surface parallel. I do not mean to affirm that there is no appreciation of Nature in Homer, quite the contrary. Still, on the whole, Nature is rather utilized by him for the purposes of illustration, than described with any special interest, or rejoiced in on its own account.

(3.) There is next the interest taken, not in natural phenomena so much as in particular localities, which have been invested with human associations, from their having been the scenes of great exploits, or of any memorable historical event. Now, this is not an appreciation of Nature in itself, as a whole, nor of individual things in themselves, and in detail; but certain places become interesting from what has happened in or near them, and their consequent suggestions of man and his history. Thus, a memorial cairn on a battle field, a ruined temple or an obelisk, the site of an ancient city, a circle of Druidic stones, like that of Stonehenge or Stennis, suggest far more than meets the eye, or appeals to the other senses. Natural objects become eloquent of the past life of the human race. They tell of deeds of daring or heroic endurance, of patriotic achievement or national disaster, of primitive life or of a vanished faith. But in all these cases, Nature becomes interesting, only in so far as it suggests and recalls some human incident, only in so far as it speaks to us of man. It is not valued on its own account; and the tendency is for Nature to fall more and more into a secondary place, while the interest of the antiquarian extinguishes that of the poet.

Then, (4.) There is a delight in Nature which is

purely realistic. It is in some respects, opposed to that last mentioned interest in places; and approaches the first mentioned delight of the child or youth, in Nature as such; but it is an extension and development of it, in a way peculiar to a certain type of mind or character. It finds expression in minute descriptions of outward things, not as objects of natural history, but in their external features, as they appeal to the eye and ear and other senses. Rural sights and sounds, the pleasures of country life are dwelt upon delightedly in detail. But this faithful realism, this close observation of Nature, however accurate, and however picturesque, is apt to stiffen into a dry chronicle of facts. It tends to degenerate into a mere spirit of recording, or taking an inventory of natural objects. It is seen at its best, perhaps, in Virgil amongst the ancients, and in Thomson, in modern English poetry. In the *Georgics*, and in the *Seasons*, we have admirable rural photographs, most accurate and happy delineations of common objects, enlivened by many allusions to less obvious phenomena; but nowhere lit up by a single flash of insight, or by the suggestions of an invisible world, revealing itself through the shadows of the visible. After reading the finest passages of these writers, you feel as though you had been turning over the pages of a photographic album full of exquisite landscape views. You have been breathing an atmosphere of pure realism, —the landscape is delineated as it appeals to the senses. There is not a single jet of imaginative feeling, not a ray of ideal light. Such poets do not understand, do not believe in the existence of, 'the light that never was, on sea or land.' In so far as they deny the deeper truth beyond, behind, or within the visible, we

may apply to them Plato's answer to a shallow critic of his ideal theory, who said to the master, 'I do not see the ideas,' 'Because you only see with your eyes, Diogenes, and not with your soul.'

But, (5.) There is a much deeper way of looking upon Nature than this, one deeper than any of those I have mentioned. It is, in part, a return to the delight in natural objects for their own sake, which I noticed as a characteristic of childhood, and of those, the freshness of whose perceptions has not been spoiled by conventionality ; but it is accompanied by a deeper vision of Nature, and a new sense of its attractiveness. That early charm, felt in the outward world, was unreflective ; and, on the whole, a surface feeling of delight, however intense or even passionate it might occasionally be. But the feeling, to which I now refer, is born of insight. It arises out of a deep appreciation of the *meaning* of Nature, which begins to exert an influence over the mind and character, amounting to fascination. As such, it is a product of certain intellectual and esthetic tendencies, which have been in operation only during the latter half of the last century, and the whole of this ; and it could not have arisen earlier. Many conspiring causes have led to it, which it would be foreign to the purpose of this lecture to trace. Note only, that so long as the sterner phenomena of Nature had no special attraction, and were even shunned with dislike, there could be no profound appreciation of it as a whole.

The interpretation of Nature, and the feeling towards it, to which I now refer, is built upon the preceding views ; it includes them, but it transcends

them. Nature is not only rejoiced in it, with the primitive and almost dumb wonder of the savage who is subdued, or of the child who is awed by it; it is not only regarded as a store-house of imagery and symbol; localities are not only invested with interest or pathos by their association with the affairs of human life, character, and destiny; not only are the details of a landscape, or of a particular object, studied with minute realistic care; but a new interpretation is given to the universe as a whole, to every separate group of natural phenomena as a class, and to every individual thing which illustrates the class. Nature is loved for its own sake. It is delighted in, because it is understood; and because it is found to be everywhere a symbol of man, a mirror of humanity. As Coleridge said, 'It hath been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages, it is the poetry of all human life, to read the book of Nature in a figurative sense, and to find therein the correspondences and symbols of the spiritual world.' Now you will see, if you go back in detail over the other ways of looking upon Nature, how the truth that is in each of them, is taken up within the comprehensiveness of this last, which is itself expanded by its union with the others. Take the second as an illustration—viz., the symbolic or allegoric. The last and highest conception may be said to be a return to the second, because Nature is regarded as a store-house of imagery which illustrates human life and affairs; but it is not on surface or chance parallels that it dwells, but on the under-working unity, the common life in Nature and in man, which finds expression in these analogies and similitudes. Similarly, you will find that all the

restful delight of Chaucer and Vaughan, all the minute pre-raphaelite detail of Virgil, all the historic and human interest in localities, which is their sole attraction to others, is preserved and glorified in the poetry, which recognises the deeper symbolism of Nature.

This highest conception, however, is very easily caricatured. For example, it has been represented as the projection of our own moods into Nature. And, doubtless, there is a falsetto note sung by many poets, in which this takes place. It has often happened that the only thing that men have seen in natural phenomena has been the morbid reflex of themselves. Thus, the bright sunrise, the peaceful sunset, or the gracious spring-time have seemed to them divine; while the storm has seemed wrathful, and the thunder revengeful. All this is a figurative and unreal way of looking upon Nature. It is an instance of the extravagance which results from pushing a truth so far, that it becomes positively erroneous, in its extreme development. If, for example, we say, with Coleridge that, 'in our life *alone* doth nature live,' this ultra idealism will distort our views both of Nature and of man. For such is the solidarity of truth, that an erroneous reading of the text of the physical world leads usually by reaction to an erroneous conception of human nature. It does not follow, however, that physical nature is a Sphinx, wholly inscrutable to our faculties, because many fail to read the text aright, or to listen to its oracle. It does not follow that our humanity is not the key by which to unlock its secrets, because many have used that key at random, or turned it improperly in the wards.

Let us see, then, somewhat more particularly to

what this conception amounts. It is not meant that Nature is, or can be, a perfect mirror of humanity ; or that we can find the exact counterpart of our consciousness, in the world beyond us. But it is meant that between man and nature there is such a co-relation or established harmony, a correspondence so close and vital, that it is only through the one, that the other can be understood. Man being at once a link in the chain of nature, and its highest development, the meaning of all the lower grades or stages becomes for the first time intelligible, when the higher is reached ; and the significance of the higher is then seen to be shadowed forth in the lower. Now this interpretation of nature and man, in their twin relationships and affinities, is reached, as I remarked at the beginning of this lecture, both by Philosophy and Poetry. It is a conclusion of the Speculative Reason ; and the highest function which Poetry fulfils is that of mediation between man and nature, interpreting each in the light of the other. Its office is to bring the human spirit into full imaginative harmony with Nature, such harmony as assures us that Nature no longer dominates over us, but that we have somehow divined its secret, or got into the heart of things ; although a sense of overshadowing mystery remains. Of course, it is not possible for the poet, any more than for the speculative philosopher, or the scientific explorer, to penetrate to the shrine, and to clear up the final mystery. But it is equally true that the poet gets face to face with *the luminous side* of Nature. It is intelligible to him, in the light of reason and of imagination combined. He apprehends it, by a process of divination, or second sight ; which is quite

as verifiable by experience, as any scientific law is verifiable.

And this is the central thought, which lies within the whole of Wordsworth's poetry, as its animating and inspiring soul. It is the sympathetic relationship, which arises out of the pre-established harmony between man and nature, the far-reaching correspondences of thought and feeling, of which we become increasingly conscious, as our communion with Nature widens and deepens. It is not only that Nature is alive, that

The mighty Being is awake,

and that its life is stimulating to ours ; not only that it is incessantly renewing that life, and fulfilling a stupendous purpose which we are able in part to apprehend ; but also, that between Man and Nature there are relations of the very closest intimacy and essential kindredness, of fellowship, and reciprocity. It is of course evident to the most ordinary observer, that Nature exercises a peculiar influence over man, that it attracts and charms the human spirit. That it exhilarates is manifest ; that it soothes and tranquilises is also apparent ; and that it exerts a ' healing power ' is often seen. But *how* does it do all this ? In virtue of what feature, or function, or characteristic does it wield over us its magic spell ? That is the question. Take the case of one closely confined for months to city life ; his brain racked by financial problems, and his physical vigour impaired by the confinement and routine of business. He goes for a short holiday amongst the mountains or by the sea. What is it that he finds, in these places, to re-in-

vigorate him ? It may be a very complex affair ; and, it is no doubt different in different individuals. In some cases, it may be easier to say what it is not, than to define what it is. But, of one thing we may be always sure ; it is not exclusively the effect of change, the contrast of scene or of occupation. The refreshment which change produces, may be almost invariably one element in it. But contrast is again experienced, when one returns to town ; and, while the man who is city-born and bred, finds the best antidote to depression in an escape to Nature and to solitude, the lonely dweller amongst the mountains finds *his* re-invigoration in periodical visits to the city. If, therefore, it requires much more than a mere change of scene, and a sense of contrast, to account for the 'healing power' of Nature, in what does it consist ? I think that we must fall back for explanation upon the *language*, with which Nature speaks to every mind that is open to her influences, to every heart that is susceptible to her voices. We, of course, speak in a figure, in supposing that Nature has a language ; but surely we do not err in so doing ? The symbol reveals fully more than it conceals. If, then, Nature has a language, can that language be translated ? or, if it cannot, can it be understood, in its own original and untranslatable vernacular ? Is there any method of initiation, by which we can learn it ? any mode of instruction, by which we may be taught it ? If these questions are answered in the negative,—if the poetic interpretation of Nature be an illusion, and we can get no farther than an inventory of phenomena and an induction of laws,—then all poetry, such as Wordsworth's, will of necessity be relegated to a secondary

rank ; just as, on the same principles, all philosophy, such as Plato's, will be consigned to the region of mist or of dreamland. But, if Nature has a soul or essence, that is recognisable by intuition—though for that very reason it may be incapable of being translated into the prosaic language of ordinary fact,—if Nature's 'secret' is in any sense an 'open' one, and if the interpretation of the secret be *man*, then, as an interpreter of the secret, Wordsworth is of all poets *facile princeps*. In this direction he has no rival, scarcely even a competitor. In every other direction he may have been excelled ; in this, he stands absolutely alone. No Greek or Latin poet, no English or German one, not Homer, nor Virgil, nor Dante, nor Chaucer, nor Spenser, nor Shakespeare, nor Milton, nor Burns, nor Goethe,—not one of his predecessors, and certainly no successor,—has grasped the profound symbolism of Nature as Wordsworth did, or seen that *humanity* supplied the key. The great goddess had been admired, and often delightfully described ; and she had been occasionally idolized. But all idolatry is puerile : and Nature had never been loved for its own sake, with a love born of reverence and rational insight, till Wordsworth's day.

At the risk of a slight recapitulation, I shall try to unfold this conception of Nature a little more in detail ; because it is, if I mistake not, a conception in which the conclusions of Poetry and Science, of Philosophy and Religion all meet together at a luminous focus. It is, as I have said, a continuation and development of all the other and earlier ways of contemplating Nature. It is an expansion of the primitive feeling of pure delight, which is seen in the infancy of

nations, and in the heart of the unsophisticated child. It is the culmination of the symbolic view of Nature, which is regarded no longer as a mere storehouse of analogies, to be casually gathered and elaborated artificially by the understanding, but as a treasury of symbols through which the invisible may be seen, of parallels and correspondencies by which the Eternal may be understood. To make use of the technical terms of Philosophy, Nature is the *macrocosm*, of which man is the *microcosm*; and, between the two there exists an old established harmony, a relationship of mutuality and perpetual indebtedness, of reciprocal fellowship and conscious intercourse.

In the ongoings and processes of nature outside of us, we see the workings of a stupendous Life, which is one, and yet infinite; although to our vision it is broken up, or rather seems to be broken up into detail. This life is co-ordinated with our own, and awakens the most subtle correspondencies of thought and feeling. It embraces and enfolds us, yet it is distinct from us. We are taken up into its vast unity; while as individuals we retain our separateness, and find that the barriers of our personality are not invaded and broken down by that all-absorbing life. Thus there is room, in the philosophy of Wordsworth, both for a dualistic and a monistic interpretation of Nature; for the unity of all things in the Infinite, and for the separateness of each from each as finite.

To whatever school of Philosophy we may belong, the final mystery of the problem of the universe must be frankly admitted. There is no possible escape from it, in this, or in any conceivable condition of

existence. But the peculiar feature in the teaching of Wordsworth (which I venture to think has not yet been adequately appraised) is the relief which any genuine communing with Nature gives to the *pressure* of the mystery, which still remains to elevate, and to ennoble the fellowship. Nature understood, conversed with, interpreted, and loved in the spirit of Wordsworth, is the great tranquilizer and restorer of the human faculties, not only when we are prostrated by sorrow and adversity, but when disorganised by speculative puzzles, unhinged by moral perplexities, or even when crushed by the burden of finally insoluble problems. And the relief which Nature gives, in such moods of mind and feeling, is not obtained by a clearing up of the mystery, *but by the removal of the things which make the mystery disturbing*, by resetting it in another form; presenting it again, in short, with a curious light at the heart of it,—a knowledge of the significance of things, illumining the darkness which remains.

This conception of Nature is one to which, as I have said, the highest efforts of speculation lead us: it is not alien to science; and it is a profoundly religious view, of the relation of the universe as product, to its formative and producing Cause. Of the four provinces of human effort, however, it is perhaps the special function of Poetry to bring out the conception luminously and fully. The scientific view of the universe may become quite as much a fetter to the human spirit, as the traditional one which it supplants. Taken by itself, its natural alliance with poetry broken, it is certain to enslave it. In the primitive ages, nature subdued man altogether.

Its immense life and its unfathomable mystery overpowered him, made him feel his utter insignificance and inevitable transitoriness. Only here and there, only now and then, did the stronger spirits learn—and they learned it very gradually—that there was a sense in which Man was greater than Nature, because he could interpret it, because it was intelligible as well as mysterious; and because, to him and to his race it had a friendly as well as a forbidding side. But if science dispels this mystery, as an illusion of primitive days, and reduces every phenomenon that has been, is, or shall be, under the control of rigid and calculable law,—if it does this, and does no more,—it may end by re-establishing the old tyranny, from which it was itself a specially healthful recoil. But let science travel where it may, and as it will, subduing new domains, conquering province after province, there is one thing which its victories cannot do. They cannot extinguish, or make superfluous, the labours of the poetic imagination, because poetry always follows in the wake of the most brilliant scientific discoveries, not as a competitor, but as a sharer in the conquest, not as rival but as a partner in the triumph. Poetry seizes the truths, which science has already verified, in order that it may interpret and *vivify* them, by subsequent expansion, giving a new significance to the facts already recognized.

And it is this that Wordsworth has done for us, so pre-eminently. He has taught us to love Nature for its own sake; and also, because we find our humanity revealed within it; that *alter ego*, which is so much larger and fuller than our narrow dividual selves. It is thus that one, who has been taught by him, or

who has imbibed his spirit loves to be *alone* with Nature: finding in its solitudes 'blithe society'—while every reflex thought of his own personality is borne down; and he perceives that outside of him, yet unfolding and alluring him, there is a Presence,

That disturbs him with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion, and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore is he still
A lover of the meadows, and the woods,
And mountains, and of all that he beholds
From this green earth, of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear—both what they half create
And what perceive—well pleased to recognise
In Nature, and the language of the sense,
The anchor of his purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul
Of all his moral being.

In conclusion, I would ask those, who may still be sceptical of the conclusion come to, to ask themselves the first time they are amongst the mountains, or by the sea-shore, or in any delightful woodland retreat, what is it that appeals so forcibly, and with such an irresistible charm to the mind and heart? Is it the material substance of Nature? Surely not. Is it then the living force, the fresh life, the ceaseless movement and the unwearied power of Nature? These may be elements, or parts of it; but surely they are not the whole. Is it not also the expressive, the intelligible *personality* of Nature? Do not tell me that

the word is a metaphoric one. I know it is. But we can surely use the symbol—and use it to good purpose—while we let it drop from the mind, in the very act of using it. It is not the movements of a machine that affect us. Nor is it a mere impulse, an emanation, an influence reaching us from some wholly inscrutable source. It is the utterance of thought and feeling, the contact of life with our lives, of the Infinite with our finite personalities. And the perception, the experience (often as it is ours), brings joy and gladness with it, sometimes even extasy. We are calmed by the calm of Nature, strengthened by her sublime repose and immeasurable patience; made tranquil by her silence, by her majestic delay, and her irresistible might, hid within the very gentlest movements.

As a sequel to these remarks, an interesting enquiry might be raised, as to the particular mood or condition of mind, in which we are best able to interpret Nature, and to find its secret. It is too wide a question, however, for discussion, at the close of this lecture. I therefore content myself with quoting the following suggestive sentences from a French writer: 'Calm is requisite for the enjoyment of Nature. The soul agitated by passion feeds upon itself alone, and consumes itself thus. It is when calm returns, that we look around, and nourish ourselves through the eye, with the harmonies of Nature.' Again: 'An age that is civilised into disease gladly turns away from the spectacle of itself to that of the external world.' Another remark of Vinet is worth quoting, as it might be thought that those whose lot it is to live habitually amongst the mountains, or in the midst of glorious

natural scenery, would have the keenest eye and heart for the varied charms of Nature. But it is not so. Ruskin has dispelled this delusion in that chapter in 'Modern Painters' which treats of 'the mountain gloom.' Vinet says: 'It is only the social man who is in a condition to feel Nature. The impression it produces is the result of a relation, often of a contrast.' 'The more we have cultivated ourselves by social intercourse, and especially the more we have suffered from it; the more, in short, society is disturbed and agonised, the more rich and profound is Nature; mysteriously eloquent to one who comes to her from out the ardent and tumultuous centres of civilisation.'

THE END.

